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UNESCO's long, slow slide

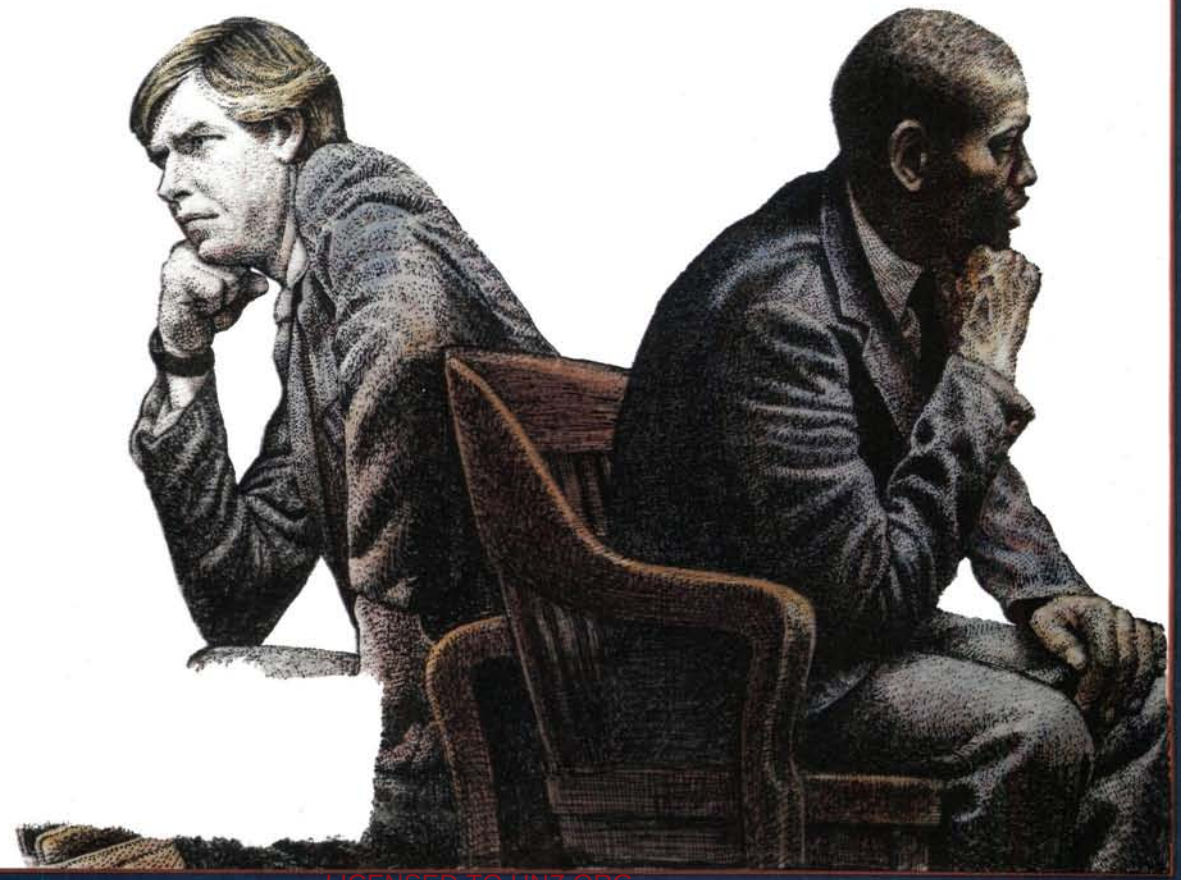
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB • MICHAEL WALZER • JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Failure in black and white

The new racism *Charles Murray*

Political dead end *Glenn C. Loury*



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CORRESPONDENCE

UP ON THE FARM

To the editors:

The farm situation is hardly as clear-cut as TRB thinks ("Buying The Farm," TNR, December 10). Since the present structure of the agricultural economy, even more than other sectors of the economy, is a result of federal policy, it hardly seems unreasonable to expect the government to alleviate some of the hardships of the current farm depression. When farmers have been induced to buy land with government loans at prices that were inflated directly as a result of federal policies, as part of an unstated policy of cheap food for the urban population, and are then confronted with falling commodity prices (resulting largely from federal policies), falling land prices (also caused by changing federal policies), and rising expenses (interest rates being the worst culprit and they being almost exclusively a function of federal policy), it hardly seems unreasonable to expect the federal government to show a merciful attitude rather than merely "collect its collateral," as TRB suggests. If, as TRB implies, farmers should either pay their freight or get out of business, fairness to the people who've staked their lives and fortunes on farming and farm-related business demands that it be done gently and gradually.

Jefferson's ideal of the yeoman farmer as the cornerstone of republican government has provided part of the rationale for federal farm policies for two centuries. Perhaps to TRB, from his urban point of view, that's not important. But isn't a viable rural sector a worthwhile leavening agent in an overwhelmingly urbanized society? Urban industrialism may be the flower of American society, but its roots are in rural life.

JOHN R. STEELE
Plankinton, South Dakota

HI-TECH GOVS

To the editors:

You have written a well-deserved encomium to Democratic governors in six states, all of whom, as your lead editorial, "Now What?" (TNR, November 26), observes, have made their local universities "the magnet for high-tech industrial development." I think you might justifiably mention a seventh state—my own, New York. Here in New York, we have set up a network of "Centers For Advanced Technology" at seven of our leading universities, using a mix of state and private money. We are planning to employ the centers to secure for our state a pioneering role in the development of new businesses and new industrial processes, especially agricultural biotechnology. This is an expression of a profound Democratic faith—a belief in the future.

MARIO M. CUOMO
Albany, New York

HOW DID JEWS VOTE?

To the editors:

There is just one problem with TRB's column explaining why Jews voted 70 to 30 for Mondale: they probably didn't ("Still Chosen," TNR, December 3). A look at heavily Jewish precincts from Skokie to Borough Park reveals a number of Reagan wins and many 50-50 splits, in addition to Mondale victories.

It appears that TRB simply has not done his homework and looked at any real live election results. What does he make, for example, of the fact that Mondale won by a narrower margin than Carter in such heavily Jewish areas of New York City as Co-op City and that Reagan won in such heavily Jewish communities as Long Island's Hewlett, Kings Point, Lawrence, Woodmere, and Cedarhurst?

Why do the exit polls done by the national media show 70 to 30 Mondale? Probably because, seeking a national sample which is only about 2.5 percent Jewish, they get their Jewish voters in mixed precincts rather than solely Jewish precincts which might provide "too many" Jewish voters for national polls. Accordingly, they are more likely to get Jews in Scarsdale, or Evanston, than Skokie or Brooklyn. They pick up the Jews who are richer, less orthodox, more integrated into American (Christian) society, and miss those who are less rich, more orthodox, and less integrated. So they pick up more likely Mondale voters and miss more likely Reagan voters. Their sample, accurate for America as a whole, is flawed in regard to Jews, who are a tiny group with rather unique geography and social, economic, and religious stratification.

What we really need is a good, large study of Jewish voting behavior in 1984. TRB's conclusions are built on thin air.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS
Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
Washington, D.C.

TAX CREDIT TALK

To the editors:

Diane Ravitch makes no mention of a persuasive argument against tuition tax credits ("The Schools And Uncle Sam," TNR, December 3). In some places conditions would harm public education if private schools attracted more money and students. Parents with a deep interest in their children's education would pull their kids out of public schools, leaving behind those without such parents. Private schools would find a way to discourage the enrollment of the physically and mentally handicapped, and would shunt children with disciplinary problems back into the public schools. The public schools would lose their present limited public constituency, and marginal ones would follow the pattern of the worst slum schools.

JOHN J. BOWEN
Orland Park, Illinois

CONNECTION CORRECTION

To the editors:

I am writing to correct the record with regard to "The LaRouche Connection" (TNR, November 19). The Department of Defense did not send Brigadier General Smith and Mr. Miller "to address a LaRouche rally." In fact, requests for participation by D.O.D. officials in the Schiller Institute meetings were rejected precisely because we did not want to become involved with partisan political activity. General Smith and Mr. Miller were asked to meet privately with about a dozen European veterans of World War II who had expressed concern about how the President's Strategic Defense Initiative might affect NATO. Although these Europeans were visiting the United States in order to attend the LaRouche/Schiller Institute meetings,

continued on page 41

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2 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... On agriculture's travail, high-tech, &c.

4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... DOUBLE STANDARDS REDUX
Applying true Reagan principles to South Africa.

5 **THE EDITORS** ..... THE CAPGUN DOCTRINE
The Defense Secretary's rules for engagement are part dimestore Clausewitz and part paralysis.

6 **MICHAEL KINSLEY** ..... ITEMIZED INTRANSIGENCE
Loophole-lovers are trying to derail Treasury's tax plan. Here's why they shouldn't get away with it.

9 **DAVID A. BELL** ..... WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS
America's pullout from UNESCO is justified, but we passed up a real chance to save it. . .

10 **A. K. SOLOMON** ..... SCIENCE UNLIMITED
. . . and in one area, we have something to lose.

14 **GLENN C. LOURY** ..... A NEW AMERICAN DILEMMA
Forty years after Myrdal, the ghetto is sinking into crime, poverty, and despair—and blacks' political isolation is growing. Do black leaders have the courage to reexamine their ideas?

18 **CHARLES MURRAY** ..... AFFIRMATIVE RACISM
Because of quotas, blacks who are less qualified than whites gain entry to Ivy colleges, corporate suites, and Wall Street law firms. They do poorer work—and whites decide all blacks are inferior.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: ODD MAN IN
Eddie Murphy scintillates in *Beverly Hills Cop.*

25 **GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB** ..... THE COMPLEAT UTOPIAN
William Godwin by Peter H. Marshall

30 **JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ** ..... THE MESS OF MOTHER RUSSIA
The Burn by Vassily Aksyonov
translated by Michael Glenny

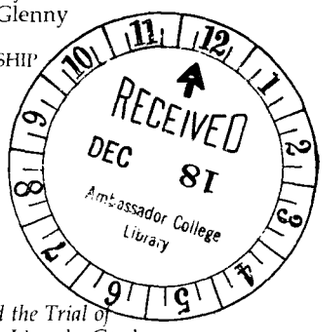
34 **MICHAEL WALZER** ..... THE SECRET OF CITIZENSHIP
Political Judgment
by Ronald Beiner

36 **DAVID THOMSON** ..... THE GENIUS AS SWINE
Fassbinder: Film Maker
by Ronald Hayman

38 **MICHAEL KORSON** ..... POEM *Reading Chekhov*

40 **CHUCK LANE** ..... MEASURING MADNESS
The Insanity Defense and the Trial of John W. Hinckley, Jr. by Lincoln Caplan

43 **WASHINGTON DIARIST** ..... MIGRATION



COVER by Harry Pincus for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Articles begin on page 14.

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FROM WASHINGTON

DOUBLE STANDARDS REDUX

Many conservatives, including some in the Reagan Administration, think the liberal moral indignation about South Africa is hypocritical. Why isn't anybody demonstrating in front of the embassies of the many African nations where blacks are oppressed by blacks? It's not an easy question. There is an answer, though, in one of the founding documents of Reaganism, Jeane Kirkpatrick's famous 1980 *Commentary* article, "Dictatorships and Double Standards." Ronald Reagan read this article (allegedly) and was so impressed that he appointed Kirkpatrick his U.N. ambassador. He should read it again.

In her roast of the Carter Administration for abandoning Somoza of Nicaragua and the Shah of Iran while warming up to worse thugs, Kirkpatrick did not argue for a single standard in dealing with unattractive regimes. Rather, she argued for a different sort of double standard: between authoritarian governments and totalitarian ones. This distinction now supports a vast literature.

Authoritarian nations are traditional societies where power is personal because it's always been that way. Thuggery, while widespread, is somewhat random. Totalitarian nations are modern states with large bureaucracies where torture and terror are efficient tools of social control. Authoritarians limit themselves to the political sphere. "Traditional autocrats," Kirkpatrick writes, ". . . do not disturb the habitual rhythms of work and leisure, habitual places of residence, habitual patterns of family and personal relations." Totalitarians, by contrast, "claim jurisdiction over the whole life of the society. . . ." She quotes a recent Vietnamese refugee about the sufferings of his countrymen: "They have been expelled from places they have lived in for generations. They have been dispossessed of virtually all possessions—their lands, their houses. They have been driven into areas called new economic zones. . . ."

Authoritarians merely want power and money. Totalitarians are driven by ideology. Finally, and most important, authoritarian regimes may evolve toward democracy and freedom. Totalitarian regimes never do.

Most of the governmental horrors in the rest of Africa are more or less of the authoritarian variety. But at least for the black majority, South Africa is a totalitarian regime. It is a fully developed modern state in which three-quarters of the population has no political rights. There is an elaborate apparatus of social control involving all the usual totalitarian paraphernalia: internal passports, secret police, censorship, political arrests, and detainment.

State control permeates deep into the personal sphere. Rules of the state determine whom you can socialize with, marry, or even invite into your home; where you can live, work, or appear in public. Families are broken up by residency regulations. Worst of all, millions are being uprooted from their homes and lands and packed off to the barren waste areas known as bantustans. All of this is in the service of a sweeping ideology. Apartheid obsesses and motivates the ruling elite of South Africa more than Marxism obsesses and motivates the latter-day rulers of the Soviet Union.

And, of course, like any totalitarian regime, the apartheid regime will never voluntarily change. It cannot evolve toward political rights for the black majority. Its entire raison d'être is to prevent exactly that. Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, professes to see "a process of change" going on. He points to the new constitution that gives second-class citizenship to 3.5 million Asians and "coloreds," while leaving 23 million blacks disenfranchised. "The Administration has been consistent in pointing out this fundamental flaw," Crocker deadpans, as if anyone hadn't noticed. Of course the exclusion of blacks is not a "flaw" in the new constitution. It's the point.

Crocker is a stitch. He told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in regard to a recent wave of police violence and mass arrests, "We have made abundantly clear . . . that we cannot see what possible purpose is served by repressive measures." What purpose? Students of totalitarianism among his own colleagues will be happy to explain to Crocker that the purpose of repressive measures is repression.

Until the recent demonstrations compelled President Reagan to mouth a few anti-apartheid pieties, his Administration's policy has been to tone down criticism of South Africa, to reject all calls for economic or other pressure, and to argue quietly for change. Crocker calls it "constructive engagement." All objective observers have concluded that this policy, far from forcing the white ruling elite "to respond to the realities of the South African situation itself," as Crocker puts it, has convinced them that they can stick it out indefinitely.

Whatever Crocker may believe, the Afrikaners patently believe that the pressure for change is off. Crocker says, regarding the forced resettlement of blacks, "The government of South Africa is well aware of our concerns on this particular point." Yet he declines to draw the obvious conclusion from the fact that, though "well aware of our concerns," they are proceeding anyway.

In any other situation, the Reaganite hard-noses would snort at the notion that you can get something out of a totalitarian regime through quiet diplomacy, without some kind of force. The minimal force urged by anti-apartheid activists is an economic boycott. This strategy is troubling, because it is an essentially Leninist one of heightening the contradictions. In the short run, a pullout of American investment would make things worse for the people we are trying to help. (In this respect it is like the current American economic subversion policy toward Nicaragua, only not as severe.) It's possible to believe in good faith that the presence of American firms, forcing the pace of economic development and nurturing rising expectations among blacks, will bring change sooner.

What's not possible to believe is that the Reagan Administration's chief concern in formulating its policy toward totalitarian South Africa, or the concern of the American companies resisting pressure to pull out, is the welfare of South Africa's people. A commercial boycott of authoritarian but unimportant Uganda was easy enough to organize several years ago. If South Africa weren't strategically useful to the United States, and a profitable business opportunity, there would be no malarkey about "constructive engagement." That's the real double standard.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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THE CAPGUN DOCTRINE

Inhibition is in. There is no flight from it. It is to be met with on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, among Democrats and among Republicans, on the left and on the right. Everybody seems to have a reason to refrain from the use of force as an instrument of American foreign policy. The good reasons, of course, are the costs of war, and the danger of nuclear catastrophe. But these are reasons for calmness and clarity in foreign policy, not for paralysis. Nor do they address the exigencies, uncalm and unclear, that the United States may face. The United States may be challenged in ways that call for force without war, or for the support or sustainment of a limited war; and the nuclear danger calls for caution, for extreme caution, but not for passivity. The tincture of isolationism all around—the new forms of the old American hanker to hunker—must be exposed, and the argument against it made with ardor.

The isolationism of the liberal left in the wake of Vietnam, the legitimate worry about the abuse of military power and the illegitimate wariness about every exercise of it, proved its power among the Democrats in the candidacy of Gary Hart. This is the most remarked-upon isolationism of the moment. The Republicans battened upon the Democrats' demonstrated distaste for the military means at our disposal. But the Republicans should have first healed themselves. For there sits in their midst the most inhibited American of all. He is Caspar Weinberger, whose queasiness about the projection of physical power tells upon the foreign policy of the United States. In a speech before the National Press Club, he finally formulated his understanding of the strategic and political conditions for the use of force.

When Caspar Weinberger occupied Grenada, Grenada occupied Caspar Weinberger. Probably the most pathetic feature of the Reagan Administration's admiration of itself is the magnitude of its pride about its campaign in Grenada. To be sure, the people of Grenada have been unburdened of the little Leninists who promised to rule them cruelly and rattle their neighbors. The mission in Grenada was probably a force for good. But not *that* much force and not *that* much good. It was hardly a milestone in military history, or in the history of America's willingness to bear any burden and pay any price. Yet here was Mr. Weinberger, in perhaps the most important statement of his tenure, bursting once more with Grenadian pride. "Vital interests," "national resolve," "every ounce of strength necessary to win the fight"—the Churchill of the eastern Caribbean.

Still, the context of Mr. Weinberger's speech was not really Grenada. It was, rather, the other instance of interventionism of the first Reagan term, the more difficult one, the disastrous one. Indeed, this speech may be read as Mr. Weinberger's reflections upon the American experience in Lebanon. He never mentioned it. He didn't have to. Welcome, post-Lebanon syndrome. And that is one of the many reasons that the speech gets our back up. For its prescriptions for the use of force stand in galling contradiction to the Administration's own practices of a year ago.

"Under what circumstances and by what means," then, should we commit our troops? Mr. Weinberger lists six. First, the occasion must be "vital to our national interest or that of our allies." To be sure; but say more. Naturally we must fight for Europe. But where else, Mr. Secretary? What *are* our vital interests? Lebanon? (You thought not.) Nicaragua? The Gulf? The Philippines? We cannot fight well everywhere; we can fight well in pitifully few places. Unless you make choices, your guidance fails to guide.

Second, we should commit troops "wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning." Well, yes; but that is not how Mr. Weinberger instructed the Marines to behave in Beirut. As for winning, Mars may not always allow. In Beirut, there was no victory for Americans to seek. There was, however, a job to do. Not all wars will be walkovers, as Grenada was. We may find ourselves with our troops bogged down, as they say. But being bogged down may be another expression for being in the fray—for fighting. The cause is what makes the difference. American troops were in Europe and the Pacific for years, but they were never bogged down.

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Third, "we should have clearly defined political and military objectives." A fine Clausewitzian notion; and a test that the American mission in Lebanon could not pass. We never did know exactly what we were doing there. Still, Mr. Weinberger begs more questions than he answers. Who will define these objectives, and on what grounds?

Fourth, "the relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed . . . must be continally reassessed." More Clausewitz for beginners.

Fifth, "there must be some reasonable reassurance that we will have the support of the people and their elected representatives in Congress. We cannot fight a battle with Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win but just to be there." This is the kicker, and Mr. Weinberger's dollop of demagoguery. The Secretary comes dangerously close to the stab-in-the-back canard, that most callow of excuses for military failure.

For a start, asking our troops just to be there was precisely what Mr. Weinberger asked in Beirut, where they were forbidden to venture out in their own defense from their Little Big Horn at the airport. More importantly, the kind of assurance that Mr. Weinberger seeks will never be found. As George Shultz said in a thinly veiled dissent last week, sometimes military action is a risk that a President must take. Military action is always a course that a President must justify. There will almost certainly be skeptics; the Constitution admires skepticism. Mr. Weinberger grasps the difficulties of a democracy at war, but the consensus of which he dreams is not something the President must demand. It is something he must deserve.

Sixth, the use of force should be "a last resort." Absolutely. But a last resort, not a late resort. Sometimes the early use of force may qualify as a last resort.

These are Mr. Weinberger's rules: six rules for staying our hand. The problem is not merely that he seems dead to the moral dimension of military action, as the moralist William Safire points out. The problem, rather, is the unlikelihood of a crisis that passes all of Mr. Weinberger's "tests." Yet even an imperfect crisis may call for soldiers. Mr. Weinberger worried at the end of his address that it may be interpreted as "an abdication of America's responsibilities—either to its own citizens or to its allies." Indeed. The only obviously correct use of force envisaged by his address is a defense of American soil.

Here is a situation where the Democrats can rightly blame—to paraphrase Jeane Kirkpatrick—America First. Mr. Weinberger's speech is an isolationist document. And it is a spooked document, spooked by the poor post-World War II record of the American military. In fact that is the best reason for staying our hand—not the wrath of the opposition, but the incompetence of our forces after Korea. Soldiers will speak candidly about these troubles. Their chief civilian superior will not. And he is in a position to do something about it, and not merely by spending more money.

Nine bad reasons to bag the tax plan.

ITEMIZED INTRANSIGENCE

A RIGHT-WING FRIEND called up a few days after Treasury Secretary Donald Regan announced his dramatic tax reform plan to ask when "the hive" would begin campaigning to destroy it. "The hive" is my friend's term for the liberal establishment which, he says, doesn't need to take direct orders from Moscow because, like a bee colony, it works on instinct. He said "the hive" was sure to oppose Regan's plan, which closes loopholes and lowers marginal tax rates, since "the hive" favors high tax rates.

I explained to my friend that, on the contrary, "the hive" would generally support Regan's plan. As a result, I predicted, his crowd would conclude that the plan was another sad example of "hive" penetration of the Reagan Administration. Sure enough, Paul Craig Roberts, the William E. Simon Professor of Political Economy at the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies and a leading supply-side publicist, writes in the December 6 *Wall Street Journal* to denounce Regan's plan as a "scheme to deindustrialize America." He blames it on moles in the Treasury Department from "the permanent government" in Washington, which always stands ready to subvert Reaganism and impose "its own agenda."

In today's poisoned political atmosphere, is there any hope for a proposal that serves the true interests of both liberals (fairness) and conservatives (economic productivity)? If there is to be any hope, it is important for liberals to understand why the major objections that have been raised to Regan's proposal, from both liberals and conservatives, are wrong.

The biggest liberal noise has come from New Yorkers upset about ending the **deduction for state and local taxes.** *The New York Times* hired an accountant and reported with alarm that a New York couple with two children and a combined income of $50,000 would face a tax increase of 54 percent under Regan's plan, despite the lower rates. This seems to violate the Administration's promise that people who aren't abusing the current system won't suffer under the new one.

But let's look at the details. This 54 percent increase is from $2,093 to $3,219. Right now, in other words, this $50,000 couple is paying barely 4 percent of its income to the federal government. Regan's plan would raise this to about 6.5 percent, hardly onerous. One reason this couple pays so little to the feds is that it is paying $2,800 a year in state and local income taxes and $4,000 a year in property taxes, all deductible. In other words, this couple pays almost three times as much to state and local governments as it pays to the national government. The implicit federal subsidy of New York through this couple's deduction of $6,800 for state and local taxes is bigger than the couple's entire federal tax bill!

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Like many deductions that Regan would eliminate for the sake of simplicity and lower rates, the one for state and local taxes is not indefensible. But the aggregate of all these amiable policies is a nasty mess. The *Times*'s nightmare example illustrates, not the unfairness of Regan's plan, but the absurd consequence of seventy years of thoughtless policymaking through the tax code.

The average New York itemizer deducts $5,119 in state and local taxes each year, about $2,000 more than the national average. Robert McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice calculates that eliminating this $2,000 difference will add about $400 to the New York itemizer's tax bill, compared to itemizers in other states. But he points out that most New Yorkers don't itemize deductions, and many who do itemize now will qualify for the standard deduction instead under Regan's scheme. The cost to New York of losing this particular deduction is probably less than $150 per taxpayer. That's not peanuts. But, as McIntyre says, "Texans might be better off if Treasury's plan were amended to keep the oil tax breaks." The reform depends—both mathematically and politically—on all of us giving up our favorite breaks simultaneously. There's no guarantee, of course, that what every group of taxpayers puts into the pot in foregone deductions will equal what they get out of the pot in lower rates. But when the differential gets down around $150 at most, it's time for people of goodwill to stop bitching.

The **deduction for charitable contributions** reflects an unarguably noble social policy: encouraging charity. Yet like most such policies applied through the tax code, it indirectly raises tax rates by shrinking the tax base, gives the biggest breaks to people in the highest brackets, and adds to the complexity of the system. The charitable deduction is also a major temptation for petty cheating, which is impossible for the I.R.S. to police. It's awfully easy to exaggerate how much you left in the collection plate, or the value of those old clothes you gave to Goodwill. Widespread petty cheating, in turn, erodes people's confidence in the fairness of the system. Regan would end the deduction for contributions under 2 per cent of income, thus preserving the incentive for major generosity.

EVEN FOR TAX reform purists, the charitable deduction is a close call. Interestingly, the charitable institutions are making less of a fuss about the deduction itself than they are about the proposed closing of an utterly unjustified loophole involving **contributions of appreciated property**.

Under current law, if you give Princeton some shares of stock that are worth $10,000, you get to deduct $10,000, no matter what you may have paid for the stock. That sounds reasonable, but it isn't. The idea of the charitable deduction is that you shouldn't pay tax on money you give away. If you earn $50,000 and give Princeton $10,000, you declare $50,000 of income, deduct $10,000, and pay tax on $40,000. (And you're a helluva guy.) But if you buy stock for $1,000 and it goes up to $10,000, then you give it to Princeton, you get the full $10,000 deduction even though you never declared the $9,000 profit as income. In effect, you're getting to deduct $9,000 that you *didn't* give away.

The real abuse of this loophole involves contributions of artwork and other items with no clear market value. Appraisers working for charitable institutions have every incentive to overestimate their value. The tax advantage of giving something away to an overly grateful charity (not Princeton, of course) can exceed the potential profit of selling it in the heartless marketplace. Regan proposes to limit your deduction to what you actually paid for the item you're giving away, indexed for inflation.

LABOR'S main objection to Regan's plan is that it would count as income many currently **untaxed fringe benefits**. (Pension contributions and medical insurance up to an annual ceiling would still be exempt.) Why not? This is a matter of simple fairness. Income in kind should be taxed just like income in cash, especially considering that better-paid people tend to get more fringes as well.

Labor also objects to the proposed taxation of currently untaxed **unemployment and disability benefits**. Naturally it seems cruel to tax the pittance of help society provides to an unemployed or disabled person. But remember, truly poor people don't pay taxes at all, because of the basic deductions and exemptions. Regan would increase these, so that a couple with two children would pay no taxes up to an income of about $12,000. He also would expand the current special credit for the disabled. No one really living on unemployment compensation or minimal disability benefits would have to pay taxes. But what about the person who works half the year for $20,000, then collects $5,000 of unemployment during the other half? Why should he or she pay less taxes than someone who works the full year for $25,000? The same logic applies to disability payments, some of which bring their recipients well into upper-middle-class income levels.

Mayors and governors throughout the land, primarily Democratic, are objecting to Regan's proposed curtailment of so-called **industrial revenue bonds**. Interest on city and state bonds is exempt from federal income tax. This allows local governments to borrow money at several points less than the going rate. Lately they have been using this privilege to funnel bargain money to private businesses.

Tax-free bonds in general are a silly way for the federal government to help local governments, since a big chunk of what the federal treasury loses in revenue ends up in the pockets of bondholders and investment bankers instead of the cities themselves. This twist, though, is especially insane. Cities offer industrial revenue bonds as part of their competition to attract business development. The federal government bears the cost, and the companies get the benefit no matter where they end up. This is big money: $3.5 billion in lost federal revenues this year. Regan also would end a related scam, **mortgage revenue bonds**, in which cities provide a back-door federal subsidy to a few lucky home buyers.

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OBJECTIONS TO Regan's plan from the right have focused on assertions that it is bad for business. Can't have that! In discussing these proposals with your local supply-sider, the key point is to forget about fairness and emphasize that they are good *in supply-side terms*. A tax system that maximizes economic output has two features. First, it should have the lowest possible tax rates on productive activity, given the government's financial needs. (Regan's plan actually goes further. It is designed to raise the same amount as our current system: in other words, not enough.) Second, the tax burden on all forms of productive activity should be as equal as possible, so that the market, rather than tax considerations, will decide how labor and capital are directed.

Right now, the top income tax rate is 50 percent, but **capital gains** are three-fifths tax-free, meaning that the top tax rate on capital gains is 20 percent. Regan would lower the top rate to 35 percent, but he would end the capital gains exclusion. He also would index the calculation of capital gains for inflation. Under even moderate inflation, many people with capital gains will find this a better deal than the current system. And investors with capital gains will continue to have the advantage of paying no taxes until they cash in their investment, unlike people whose profit takes the form of dividends or interest.

America's great troubadour of capital gains is George Gilder. Writing in the November 30 *Wall Street Journal*, Gilder charges that Regan's proposal to end the capital gains exclusion "attacks the very lifelines of American entrepreneurs: the venture capital and new equity markets." Gilder believes there is some metaphysical difference between capital gains and other forms of capital profits. Tax accountants and lawyers know better. Vast reservoirs of entrepreneurial genius are dissipated every year in efforts to move money from one side of this magical line to the other. In the process, billions of dollars go where a free market would never send them. Encouraging entrepreneurship is a fine social policy, just like all the fine liberal social policies currently promoted through the tax code. But like these policies, it operates with wild inefficiency, and at the cost of higher tax rates in general to make up for the lost revenue. It makes no sense.

In 1981, at President Reagan's insistence, Congress adopted something called the Accelerated Cost Recovery System (A.C.R.S.) for **business depreciation**. A.C.R.S. permits businesses to deduct the cost of new plant and equipment over very short periods of time. This amounts to a tax break for new business investment, because a neutral tax system would permit businesses to write off capital investments only as they wear out.

Encouraging new investment was the idea, of course. But A.C.R.S. was badly designed. Combined with the long-standing investment tax credit, it offers *negative* effective tax rates on some kinds of business investment (meaning the government pays you to do it), while other kinds get very little break at all. As a result, different companies and industries face wildly different tax burdens. Some now pay no taxes at all. Naturally, this affects the flow of capital in the economy. In effect, we've been conducting an industrial policy through the tax system, only a stupid one: preferring capital-intensive businesses over labor-intensive ones, low-tech over high-tech, established businesses over new ones (which don't yet pay taxes, therefore don't get the breaks).

Regan would replace A.C.R.S. with a depreciation schedule that attempts to match the rate at which business investments actually wear out (with a correction for inflation). By doing this and ending other specific business subsidies, he is able to lower the overall corporate tax rate from 46 percent to 33 percent, a break all companies share in equally. He also adds a deduction for half of all dividends paid out.

It's true that, overall, Regan's plan shifts about $22 billion in taxes from individuals to corporations. But this, too, can be justified in supply-side terms, without mawkish resort to questions of fairness. One aspect of tax efficiency is that the system should not discriminate between capital and labor. If it does, businesses will be led to replace people with machines even when this does not make true economic sense. Our system does tax labor much more heavily than capital, a defect that has gotten much worse in recent years as the Social Security levy has skyrocketed and various tax breaks for capital have been enacted. Regan's plan only partially restores the balance.

The best thing about the Regan plan is that the capital gains and depreciation changes, taken together with lower top rates and other, minor reforms, would wipe out the tax shelter business. The essence of a tax shelter is to buy a business asset that can be depreciated for an artificial tax "loss," and then to sell it with the "profit" as a capital gain. When Congress enlarged the capital gains exclusion from one-half to three-fifths in 1978, and when it instituted A.C.R.S. in 1981, opportunities for tax shelters blossomed. Regan's plan will dry them up. No more insanity like Hartford selling City Hall to investors then leasing it back. Affluent people who have been sheltering their money will pay more taxes. But even many of them will be better off than before—if, to take a realistic example, they've been paying some shelter operator two dollars for every three he saves them in taxes at current rates. In essence, the government and the taxpayer will be cutting out the middleman and splitting the take.

What's worst about tax shelters is not that they let the rich avoid taxes, but that they misdirect billions of dollars of capital into unproductive investments (most notably real estate), and they waste the brainpower of some of America's smartest people. Of course shelters are just the extreme example. Our current tax system does these things in all sorts of ways. The Regan proposal to clean up the mess would be a great achievement for America. But the plan will quickly unravel if people start picking at different parts. Please, let's not blow it.

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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At UNESCO, the U. S. prepares to call it quits.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

BY DAVID A. BELL

THE UNITED NATIONS Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, founded by the Western nations as an expression of their highest intellectual and moral values, is in an advanced state of decay. Nearly 30 percent of UNESCO's programs are redundant. According to the State Department, the organization spends 80 percent of its $187 million annual budget at its Paris headquarters, and only 20 percent in the field. The organization has continued to keep three K.G.B. agents on its payroll, even after France exposed and deported them. Above all, UNESCO serves as a forum both for the excoriation of Israel, and for the promotion of a "New World Information and Communication Order," whose advocates believe that freedom of information "has become an instrument of domination in the hands of the owners of the information media." Yet UNESCO is also an organization that still devotes considerable energy to irreproachable good works, from scientific research to the elimination of illiteracy. And it is the only major international organization to promote intergovernmental projects on science, education, and culture. What is to be done?

For the Reagan Administration, the solution is clear: get out. A year ago, the United States announced that unless UNESCO instituted major reforms, it would withdraw at the end of 1984. It is now expected that on December 31 we will shut down our delegation to UNESCO headquarters in Paris and withdraw our 25 percent share of UNESCO's budget. Britain has given notice that it will follow next year, and it is possible that more Western European countries will join the exodus. The move serves as a clear riposte to the "constant, unremitting, ideological, and political attack" on Western interests that Daniel Patrick Moynihan decried at the U.N. in the 1970s—and as such, it deserves to be applauded. Yet it remains to be seen whether the United States and its allies will find a way to revive UNESCO's ailing ideal of international cooperation.

Today, the State Department refers to the concerns of the Western bloc at UNESCO as "minority interests"—a development which would have seemed highly unlikely to the delegates who assembled for UNESCO's Founding Conference in November 1945. Nearly all the twenty founding nations were "Western" in outlook, and the constitution they approved for the organization, its preamble drafted by Archibald MacLeish, came right out of a half century of progressive American thought. "Since wars begin in the minds of men," it began, "it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." With a modest initial budget of $6 million, UNESCO began life as a clearinghouse for educational, scientific, and cultural projects.

Above all, the founders hoped UNESCO would stand for a new style in international relations, one that would somehow transcend politics. The constitution proclaimed sanguinely that "the responsibilities of the Director-General and of the staff shall be exclusively international in character." Yet inevitably, UNESCO has been "political" from the start. During the Korean War, for example, in an overtly political move which delayed the entry of the Soviet Union until 1954, the organization provided nonmilitary aid to the United Nations forces fighting on the side of the South. Nonetheless, throughout the cold war, UNESCO generally avoided falling into a single political camp and was able to launch some of its most worthwhile projects, including the first of several ambitious literacy programs in Asia and Africa, and a social sciences research center in Vienna that became a rendezvous for scholars from both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Around 1960 decolonialization created scores of new states, most of whom immediately joined the U.N. Fifteen years later these states would exercise their political power in UNESCO at the West's expense, but their entry into the organization had a more immediate effect as well. As Richard Hoggart, Assistant Director-General from 1970 to 1975, and the author of an eloquent memoir of UNESCO, writes, there was a "shift . . . from intellectual matters to development. Whatever it was, UNESCO was henceforth a major development agency." The budget expanded dramatically, and large-scale cultural projects were launched in Egypt, Sudan, Nepal, Pakistan, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and many other newly independent countries. From then on UNESCO had a definite and powerful political direction: pro-Third World.

Soon afterward another event occurred with great significance for UNESCO's future. In 1962 a Frenchman named René Maheu became Director-General, and began a slow accumulation of power that would transform his office into a virtual dictatorship within the organization. A brilliant man who had studied philosophy at the Ecole Normale as a classmate of Jean-Paul Sartre and Raymond

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The State Department has presented a strong case for U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO. Not only have the organization's budget and bureaucracy grown with little restraint, but the organization has become thoroughly politicized—and not in a direction helpful to the United States and its allies. But almost a third of UNESCO's budget goes to science, and these funds help direct scientific resources to problems of development, train scientists in the developing world, and support intergovernmental cooperation in scientific research. In the sciences, at least, much of UNESCO's work cannot be easily duplicated. As a National Academy of Sciences study concludes, "There is at present no viable overall alternative for UNESCO's science programs."

For one thing, UNESCO's politicization has not affected its unique function as an international clearinghouse for scientific projects. Unlike organizations such as the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, UNESCO is broadly interdisciplinary; it can coordinate resources from many different branches of science on a single problem. In the 1970s, for example, UNESCO created a program called "Man and the Biosphere" to study how human activities affect the environment. A total of 105 nations now participate in this program, which includes 1,000 field projects in 80 countries, and which has studied tropical forests, grazing lands, lakes and water systems, and the ecosystems of arid and semi-arid zones.

UNESCO can also mobilize governments, obtain financial commitments, and coordinate the activities of other agencies in a way that private scientific groups cannot. In oceanography, for example, research routinely requires great expenditures, and the cooperation of coastal nations around the world. To organize these nations independently, when the United States does not even maintain diplomatic relations with some of them, would be prohibitively difficult. Without UNESCO's International Oceanographic Data Exchange Program, U.S. agencies would lose much of the oceanographic data they need to map the great circulating ocean currents that determine the world's climate.

The State Department says that it will continue UNESCO's work by redirecting the funds it currently contributes to the agency into other international organizations. But the only organization that could conceivably take over any substantial part of UNESCO's scientific activities is the International Conference of Scientific Unions. And the I.C.S.U. is not an inter-governmental agency, but a consortium of twenty unions from separate scientific disciplines. It is the forum in which scientists exchange information across disciplines and borders, and in which we can address such delicate questions as the right of scientists from one country to participate in scientific meetings in any other. It is only a modest organization with a small, Paris-based staff, which relies on the unpaid services of scientists from around the world to carry out its projects. Whereas UNESCO has 161 members, the I.C.S.U. has relations with only 71 states, virtually all of them in the developed world.

The I.C.S.U. and UNESCO have recently cooperated on a scientific project in which I have been involved, and which illustrates the way UNESCO helps science in the developing world: the Distinguished Fellowships in Science program, established in 1982 at U.S. initiative. The program awards one-year fellowships to promising young scientists from less-developed countries who have already carried out postdoctoral studies in those countries. The fellowships allow a winner to study in a developed country for a year, and require both that his home institution give him a job the next year, and that he return home to take it. The fellowships are awarded by an international committee of scientists chosen jointly by I.C.S.U. and UNESCO. The committee eventually hopes to award as many as ten fellowships a year, and believes that the graduates will form an elite body of scientific leaders in their nations.

Of the five fellows selected to date by the Distinguished Fellowships in Science program, four plan to study in the United States. Indeed, according to a State Department report, of all the fellows sponsored by UNESCO in 1982, 183 went to the United States and only 19 to the Soviet Union. And of the $46 million the United States contributed to UNESCO last year, 40 percent will be eventually returned to the American economy as tuition to American universities from UNESCO-sponsored fellows, payment to U.S. consulting firms from UNESCO projects, and so forth.

In 1976 I was the scientific member of the U.S. delegation to UNESCO's General Conference in Nairobi. At the conference, I found myself seated between delegates from two poor African nations. In my speech I put forward the U.S. initiative for the Distinguished Fellowships in Science. After I sat down, I found both my neighbors warmly appreciative. Though they have reservations about American political leadership, they welcomed American scientific leadership. If we withdraw from UNESCO, we will forfeit this leadership, and the respect it entails.

UNESCO's first Director-General, the eminent British biologist Julian Huxley, conceived of the organization as a place where education, science, and culture could be treated on an international plane without interference from international politics. In the sciences, UNESCO still largely adheres to those original ideals. It will be a shame if the American and British withdrawal results in depriving the world of a forum where otherwise unfriendly nations can cooperate in scientific endeavors, and where American scientific prowess can be of benefit to all.

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Aron, Maheu brought to the post a peculiarly French intellectual arrogance. Athough not a Marxist, he shared the obsequious sensitivity to Third World concerns common in the French intelligentsia of the period. Thus, according to one former UNESCO official, he "led the way in turning UNESCO from an organization devoted to the ideals of the charter to just another development organization."

MAHEU LEFT UNESCO in 1974, the same year that its troubles began in earnest. On November 20, 1974, UNESCO's General Conference, the biennial assembly of its member states, voted 64 to 27 for an Arab-sponsored resolution to withhold cultural funds from Israel amounting to $25,000, allegedly because archeological excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem constituted "a danger to its monuments." A day later, a second resolution passed 48 to 38, barring Israel from membership in any of UNESCO's regional groups. Lebanon's Halim Said Abu-Izzedin, speaking for the majority, declared: "Israel is a state which belongs nowhere because it comes from nowhere." In response to these votes, the United States withdrew its contribution to UNESCO's budget from the agency for sixteen months.

The year 1974 also marked the arrival of UNESCO's new Director-General, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow of Senegal, and the year's events set in motion the organization's deterioration under his ten-year rule. M'Bow is a shrewd, acerbic man who had previously served as minister of education in Senegal. In the early '70s Senegalese political opponents were searching for a way to get rid of him, and at the same time, the black African states were making it known that they wanted a black African appointed the head of a U.N. agency. M'Bow got the job. At first he seemed amenable to Western concerns about the agency's politicization. "We must avoid those conflicts that take on the character of systematic confrontations," he said at his swearing-in. "I want to launch an urgent appeal for tolerance and understanding and seek consensus through patient dialogue." But in fact, from the start M'Bow saw Western protests over the Israel affair as colonialist and racist. In January 1975 he told a Reuters correspondent: "I believe a campaign against UNESCO is being waged by the Anglo-Saxon press." And by 1976, the American former director of UNESCO's Public Information Office, Joel Blocker, was warning, in a prescient article for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, of a "coming international struggle over the press."

That struggle began in the late '70s, as radical Third World spokesmen voiced their hopes for the creation of a "New World Information and Communication Order" (N.W.I.C.O.) under UNESCO auspices. Noting that four major Western news agencies (AP, UPI, Reuters, Agence France-Presse) produce 90 percent of the world's foreign news stories, they argued for the need to "redistribute information" and present the Third World in a more favorable light. Their calls led to UNESCO's sponsoring of a commission on the N.W.I.C.O. to discuss measures for reform. The measures included a covert plan for censorship through the "licensing" of journalists by host countries (ostensibly to "protect" them).

Western delegates had some success in moderating the commission's 1980 final report, but at a UNESCO meeting in February 1981 the ideological battle continued. The radicals floated a proposal to create an international licensing board for journalists, endowed with the power to ensure their compliance with the "generally accepted" ethics of their profession. At the last minute, Western delegates blocked the measure. But the radicals continue to bring up the subject, and will do so again at a Mexico City conference next spring sponsored by the Latin American countries.

UNESCO's political irresponsibility is matched by its administrative bungling. After the announcement of the U.S. withdrawal last December, Representative James Scheuer of New York called on the Congressional General Accounting Office to perform an audit of the organization. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal* last month, Scheuer commented, "the charges detailed in the G.A.O. report are of the sort that would cause the immediate downfall of any agency administrator in most any government."

The audit (many of whose conclusions are corroborated by an internal UNESCO study released last September) reveals that 800 out of UNESCO's 4,115 professional posts are vacant, and that 225 of them have been vacant an average of 18 months. The study also points out that UNESCO employees are paid without any proof that they actually worked, or that they performed the duties they were assigned. Only 2.5 percent of the employees believe that merit plays the main role in promotions. It all confirms Richard Hoggart's observation that "idleness can be found in any place of work, large or small. But in some people at UNESCO it can reach such heights that one needs a more poetic word to describe it, such as 'sloth.' "

The G.A.O. audit also makes clear that the primary cause of UNESCO's mismanagement is the Director-General himself. M'Bow took over an office transformed by René Maheu into a virtual dictatorship, but he did not inherit Maheu's dictatorial skills. Nonetheless, according to the audit, "all substantive and most routine decisions" are still made personally by the director. The audit further notes that the General Conference—in theory UNESCO's sovereign body—has little effective control over the Secretariat, and that the Secretariat routinely ignores the recommendations of external auditors.

ON DECEMBER 28, 1983, the United States gave one-year's notice of its intention to pull out. According to a State Department spokesman: "UNESCO has extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with, has exhibited hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press, and has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion." In a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Pérez de Cuellar, Secretary of State George Shultz emphasized that the decision was made more in sorrow than in anger, and said that

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the United States was not planning similar action with regard to other U.N. agencies. He added that the United States considered the one-year period as a trial: "This year will give UNESCO a potential opportunity to respond to the serious concerns that have caused our withdrawal. . . . We remain open to indications of serious improvement."

UNESCO has made some obvious efforts at reform over the past year which deserve American attention. Even Owen Harries, formerly the Australian ambassador to UNESCO and now one of the agency's harshest critics, admits that "there has been greater impetus toward reform in the past year than in the whole history of the organization." Leonard Sussman, director of Freedom House and vice-chairman of the advisory U.S. Commission on UNESCO (which opposes withdrawal), cites a letter M'Bow wrote to him, in which he disavows the idea of licensing for journalists, as evidence that the organization "is moving in the right direction." Tahlman Krumm, another member of the commission, reports that at an October executive board meeting he attended, the United States made progress toward three goals: attainment of a zero-growth budget, protection of minority (i.e., Western) interests, and the removal of "divisive elements" from UNESCO's communications program.

YET THERE ARE indications that the Reagan Administration does not take the idea of reforming UNESCO very seriously. The Administration announced the decision to withdraw shortly after one biennial General Conference, and fixed the date of withdrawal for well before the next. The timing of the decision, whether coincidental or not, did not give the supreme legislative body of UNESCO a chance to consider our objections. As for the October executive board meeting, Tahlman Krumm describes "the measurable glee of some in the American delegation who were hell-bent on getting out," and says that the American delegation introduced controversial, extraneous motions to distract from the questions at hand. "In the twelfth hour new issues were being raised," he says. "This suggests to me that it was important to establish a record of rejection." A Congressional staff member who has closely followed the year's events agrees with Krumm, claiming that the State Department prevented Jean Gerard, the American ambassador to UNESCO, from circulating copies of the G.A.O. audit at the meeting. Presumably, he says, it did not want to give M'Bow the opportunity to respond to the G.A.O.'s criticisms.

Yet the clearest indication that the State Department has no interest in reconsidering withdrawal has little to do with the events of the past year. Given the organization's extreme centralization, and the Director-General's immense power, the real problem with UNESCO is M'Bow himself, and M'Bow is a subject on which the State Department keeps resolutely silent. It does not even strongly criticize UNESCO's centralization, the main feature of its mismanagement, but refers instead to unchecked budget growth, a subject the current Administration has little to boast about.

One Administration official says that the Third World nations would have construed an attack on M'Bow, a Senegalese Muslim, as racially inspired, and that this "would have pulled the defenses around him." Thus the State Department made "a conscious decision" to refrain from attacking him. Yet even if this were correct, it still would have been possible to propose that UNESCO redress the imbalance of power between the Director-General and the General Conference. As Owen Harries pointed out at Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee hearings on UNESCO last week, "the hands-off policy toward the Director-General has introduced a degree of illogicality" into our treatment of the organization. If, as Shultz states, the United States is serious about reforming UNESCO, then it should not hesitate to push for the necessary first steps in this direction: decentralization, and a change in leadership.

STATED SIMPLY, UNESCO doesn't work anymore. Its politicization, its advocacy of "statist" policies such as N.W.I.C.O, and its sheer inefficiency leave its operations hopelessly confused and ineffectual. But withdrawal by itself has little effect beyond the immediate display of American resolve. If the Reagan Administration goes ahead and demonstrates the commitment to, in the words of Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Gregory Newell, "meeting the needs of the Third World," then the American-British withdrawal will amount to more than an ephemeral display of bravado. The Administration can take the $46 million a year it gives to UNESCO and put it into development projects that do not leave 80 percent of their budget in Paris, but work effectively toward the goals expressed in UNESCO's charter.

Unfortunately, the State Department has done nothing to suggest that it will follow this course. It has never even made clear what specific changes would have to occur for the United States to remain a member of UNESCO. Indeed, at the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee hearings, chairman Orrin Hatch had to ask Secretary Newell to prepare a report on the subject. If the State Department had been serious about reform, it would have prepared such a report twelve months ago. Instead, it has spent the year pursuing a policy of confrontation, endlessly repeating the familiar litany of UNESCO's sins.

It is possible that UNESCO will one day submit to a thorough overhaul. If it does, then the United States will be able to rejoin. If not, we will have to work on our own to pursue the organization's objectives. And since the State Department does not seem much inclined to do this, our withdrawal may well amount to nothing more than a well-publicized display of displeasure. Rather than helping resuscitate the spirit of international cooperation which UNESCO once represented, we may be doing nothing more than delivering the *coup de grâce*. □

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Racial politics, black and white.

A New American Dilemma

By Glenn C. Loury

FORTY YEARS AGO the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal argued in *An American Dilemma* that the problem of race in the United States cut to the very core of our definition as a people. Myrdal described America as a nation which, although founded on the ideals of individual liberty and personal dignity, could not bring itself—through either law or social practice—to treat the descendants of slaves as the equals of whites. The dilemma for white leaders in particular was that these racial practices were so deeply ingrained that even if they wanted to get rid of them, it seemed politically impossible to do so. In 1944 Myrdal hardly could have foreseen the extent to which the United States would confront and begin to resolve this great dilemma. As recently as twenty years ago many conservatives denied as a matter of principle that the government should interfere in private decisions in order to assure equal opportunity for black people. (Ronald Reagan, for example, opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act.) Two decades later that position has been completely discredited, both legally and morally.

The old racism is not gone, but the disparity between American ideals and racial practice has narrowed dramatically. Today the civil rights debate is dominated by the issue of affirmative action, in which the question is whether the history of racism warrants special—not simply equal—treatment for blacks. Whereas blacks were once excluded from politics by subterfuge and the threat of violence, they now constitute a potent political bloc with often decisive influence on local and national elections. Martin Luther King Jr., whose passionate, relentless, and compelling articulation of black aspirations made him the nemesis of Presidents, governors, and F.B.I. officials alike, is now honored as a national hero. The moral victory of the civil rights movement is virtually complete.

And yet racial divisions remain. Today we are faced with a new American dilemma, one that is especially difficult for black leaders and members of the black middle class. The bottom stratum of the black community has compelling problems which can no longer be blamed solely on white racism, and which force us to confront fundamental failures in black society. The social disorganization among poor blacks, the lagging academic performance of black students, the disturbingly high rate of black-on-black crime, and the alarming increase in early unwed pregnancies among blacks now loom as the primary obstacles to progress. To admit these failures is likely to be personally costly for black leaders, and may also play into the hands of lingering racist sentiments. Not to admit them, however, is to forestall their resolution and to allow the racial polarization of the country to worsen. If the new American dilemma is not dealt with soon, we may face the possibility of a permanent split in our political system along racial lines.

It is deeply ironic that this dilemma has arisen in the wake of the enormous success of the civil rights movement. In little more than a generation, the United States has changed from a country callously indifferent to the plight of its black citizens into one for which that plight is a central feature of our political life. A new middle class of well-educated and well-placed blacks has emerged, whose members can be found in technical, managerial, and professional positions throughout the leading institutions of the nation. Differences in earnings between young, well-educated black and white workers have diminished dramatically; and something approximating parity in economic status has been achieved for young, intact black families.

Yet, in general, even this class of blacks does not view itself as being in the American mainstream. There is a keen appreciation among blacks of all social classes that at least one-third of their fellow blacks belong to the underclass. There is no way to downplay the social pathologies that afflict this part of the black community. In the big-city ghettos, the youth unemployment rate often exceeds 40 percent. It is not uncommon for young men to leave school at age 16 and reach their mid-20s without ever having held a steady job. In these communities, more than half of all black babies are born out of wedlock. (In Central Harlem the most recently reported figure is 79.9 percent.) Black girls between the ages of 15 and 19 constitute the most fertile population of that age group in the industrialized world; and their birth rate is twice as high as any other group of women in the West. (See "Children As Parents," by Ann Hulbert, TNR, September 10.)

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The undeniable progress of the black middle class has been accompanied by the undeniable spread of these problems. Today nearly three of every five black children do not live with both their parents. The level of dependency on public assistance for basic economic survival in the black population has essentially doubled since 1964. About one-half of all black children are supported in part by transfers from the state and federal governments. Over half of black children in public primary and secondary schools are concentrated in the nation's twelve largest central city school districts, where the quality of education is notoriously poor, and where whites constitute only about a quarter of total enrollment. Only about one black student in seven scores above the 50th percentile on the standardized college admissions tests. Blacks, though little more than one-tenth of the population, constitute approximately one-half of the imprisoned felons in the nation.

Among those great many blacks who have entered the middle class in the past twenty years there is, understandably, a deeply felt sense of outrage at the injustice of conditions endured by the black poor. Somewhat less understandable is their reluctance to consider their own success as evidence of the profound change that has taken place in American attitudes, institutions, and practices. The position of poor blacks is perceived as being inherently linked to the racist past of the nation, as proving that the historic injustice of which Myrdal spoke still flourishes.

Moreover, middle-class blacks do not generally look to their own lives as examples of what has become possible for those blacks still left behind. Talented black professionals, who in decades past would have had scant opportunity for advancement, now, in the interest of fairness and racial balance, are avidly sought in corporate board rooms or on elite university faculties. Nonetheless they find it possible, indeed necessary, to think of themselves as members of an oppressed caste.

THE GREAT MAJORITY of Americans do not see the situation of blacks in this way. Whereas black politicians and intellectuals consider the ghetto and all that occurs there to be simple proof that the struggle for civil rights has yet to achieve its goals, others are repelled by the nature of social life in poor black communities. Though most are too polite to say so, they see the poverty of these communities as substantially due to the behavior of the people living there. They are unconvinced by the tortured rationalizations offered by black and (some) liberal white spokesmen. They do not think of themselves or their country as responsible for these dreadful conditions. Most nonblack Americans know something of hardship. Most were not born wealthy; many have parents or grandparents who came here with next to nothing, and who worked hard so that their children might have a better life. Most aren't hostile or even indifferent to the aspirations of blacks. In fact they point with pride to the advancement that blacks have made, to the elaborate legal apparatus erected since 1964 to assure racial fairness, and to the private efforts undertaken by a great number of individuals and institutions to increase black participation in their activities.

A recent Gallup poll conducted for the Joint Center for Political Studies, a black think tank in Washington, revealed the dimensions of the gulf between black and white perceptions. More than two out of three whites said they believe that "all in all, compared with five years ago, the situation of black people in this country has improved," compared to only about one in three blacks. Nearly one-half of the whites polled were "satisfied with the way things are going at this time," but only one-seventh of blacks were. One-half of blacks felt that "blacks should receive preference in getting jobs," compared to one in eleven whites. Some 72 percent of blacks but only 31 percent of whites thought of Ronald Reagan as "prejudiced."

The 1984 Presidential election made distressingly clear why this gap is not likely to be bridged. Two-thirds of all whites voted for Reagan, while nine-tenths of all blacks voted against him. And black leaders went beyond merely opposing the President. Roger Wilkins lambasted the Administration for engaging in a "concerted effort to constrict the democratic rights" of blacks, an effort which Coretta King said was aimed at "turning back the clock" on black progress. Benjamin Hooks declared that the Administration had to be "eliminated from the face of the earth."

It strains credulity to attribute Reagan's broadly based landslide to a resurgent racism among whites. Much broader forces are evidently at work—just as there are forces broader than racism sustaining and encouraging the social pathology of the ghetto. But black leaders, like their constituents, cannot seem to bring themselves to admit this. They prefer to portray the problems of the ghetto as stemming from white racism, and to foster racial politics as the primary means of fighting it. Within the Democratic Party, racial splits such as the one created by Jesse Jackson's Presidential candidacy or the civil war between Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and his white opponents may well be a sign of things to come. The already tense sparring between New York Mayor Ed Koch and his black foes could grow into bitter confrontation in next year's mayoral campaign. By casting their political battles in starkly racial terms, black leaders help to promote a racial schism in American political life, without necessarily addressing the most fundamental problems of their constituents.

UNFORTUNATELY, neither Democratic leaders nor Republican leaders nor black leaders have much incentive to prevent this political fracas from exacerbating the general racial division of American society. The Democrats, having just finished a campaign in which a quarter of the votes for Walter Mondale were cast by blacks, appear to have a big stake in the perpetuation of racial schism. Far from viewing the "color gap"

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with alarm, Democratic strategists have come to depend on it. Yet under electoral pressure the Democrats have had to keep their distance from the black leadership. The Democrats' chief problem is how to maintain the enthusiasm of black supporters without alienating white supporters. Witness one of the central dilemmas of the Mondale candidacy: how to keep Jesse Jackson close enough to win blacks but far enough away to placate whites.

The Republicans and President Reagan cannot, in the short run, expect to win much support from blacks, no matter what they do. Moreover, any such overt appeal to blacks by Reagan would risk alienating the right wing of his constituency. Some right-wing Republican candidates are not above exploiting the vestiges of racism. (Jesse Helms, for example, managed to mention Jesse Jackson's name twenty-four times in a fund-raising solicitation during his recent reelection campaign.) Thus, from Reagan's point of view, the benefits of rapprochement will seem slight, and the costs as potentially great. Representative Jack Kemp's speech at the Urban League convention last summer—in which he made an overt appeal for black support, pledging to include the black poor in his "new opportunity society"—was a hopeful exception to the Republicans' indifference.

BUT OF ALL the actors in this drama, black leaders play the most important role, and the most problematic. The prevailing ideological cast of many prominent black leaders and intellectuals is considerably to the left of the national mainstream, and often of the black community itself. Because of the long history of racist exclusion, many blacks place group solidarity above mere philosophical differences when deciding whom to support. A black ideologue of the left (or, for that matter, of the right—Louis Farrakhan, for example) is almost immune from challenge by another black, since it is precisely in ideological terms that whites most often oppose him. By posing the challenge, the black critic seems to ride with whites against his own race. The black challenger may thus forfeit black political support if he expands his appeal to white voters by criticizing incumbent black leadership. The opposition of whites to the black incumbent is taken by other blacks as proof that he is "sticking it to the man," and thus deserves support. The black challenger winds up appearing, in the eyes of his own people, to be an agent of forces inimical to their interests.

As a result, many black leaders act in ways which exacerbate their isolation from the American political mainstream without fear of reproach by more centrist blacks. The way in which the Voting Rights Act has come to be enforced compounds the problem. To avoid redistricting battles in courts, legislatures routinely create overwhelmingly black, electorally "safe" districts for black incumbents. As a result, most nationally prominent black politicians do not require white support to retain their prominence. Those blacks who do require white support—Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, for example—are discernibly closer to the center of the Democratic Party.

The results can be bizarre. Jesse Jackson actually campaigned in the Deep South urging local politicians to join his Rainbow Coalition so that, working together, they might enact the Equal Rights Amendment, eliminate state right-to-work laws, and secure a nuclear freeze. Most candidates running in the South on such a platform have short political careers. Lasting alliances between poor southern blacks and whites, if they are to emerge at all, will not emerge with this as the substance of the black politician's appeal. Yet southern whites who are repulsed by such "progressive" candidates are written off as racists. And the incentive for the emergence of a centrist black leadership which might someday achieve significant white support is diminished even further.

PHILOSOPHER Robert Nozick once gave a lecture at Harvard entitled, "Why Do Intellectuals Hate Capitalism?" and found one intellectual's answer scribbled on a poster announcing the talk: "Because we're smart!" One way black leaders might answer the question, "Why are you so undifferentiated in expressed philosophic perspective?" is: "Because we're smart"—smart enough to understand black interests and to uniformly recognize them to be well served by a left-liberal politics.

This argument, while not implausible, is not necessarily correct. An alternative explanation for the ideological posture of black leaders is this: the outcome of the internal struggles among black elites for leadership is sharply affected by the general perception of the black community on the quality of race relations. When most blacks think that things are going poorly for the group (as they do now), relatively radical forces in the leadership will be strengthened. When the American political establishment, liberal or conservative, reacts negatively to these radical leaders, it becomes all the more difficult for moderate blacks to challenge them.

This is what happened in 1984. Last summer Jesse Jackson's candidacy came under severe criticism from Democrats and Republicans alike. There was talk of not permitting him to speak at the Democratic Convention unless he repudiated Farrakhan. Conservative commentators were extremely critical of his post-primary junket to Central America and Cuba. At the convention, many blacks were disappointed by the limited concessions Mondale offered Jackson supporters. Their discomfort was enhanced by the adoption in Dallas of the most conservative major party platform in the last fifty years. As a result, the black leadership was fiercely critical of both Mondale and Reagan (for different reasons, of course), but virtually silent about some of Jackson's more extreme views. It would have required great courage for any black leader of prominence to publicly criticize, say, Jackson's foreign policy positions, or to publicly acknowledge the serious problem of black anti-Semitism

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during the campaign—and virtually none did.

This alternative explanation accounts for two central features of black politics today that the "Because we're smart" retort cannot. First, it suggests why black political debate, though by no means non-existent, is so truncated. Consider that between 1965 and 1979 the number of low-income blacks who were victims of robbery rose by 1,266 per 100,000; among middle-income whites the increase was 359. But the residents of inner-city Detroit, who face one of the highest criminal victimization rates anywhere, regularly return to Congress John Conyers, who uses his position as chairman of the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice to crusade against police brutality and white-collar crime, but spends little time publicly addressing the plight of the victims of street crime. No serious challenge to Conyers has ever been waged by a black attacking him for failing to represent the community's interest in reducing crime. Here is a case where, arguably, blacks' interests are not served by Conyers's traditional left-liberal perspective. What blacks in Detroit need is less, not more, uniformity of opinion.

What conceivable justification can black leaders offer for such limited debate among the victims of crime about Conyers's views on crime? To argue that ordinary black people identify with and excuse the criminals who brutalize them would be to plumb the depths of fatuity and condescension. And yet consider how the N.A.A.C.P., the largest and oldest civil rights organization in the country, characterizes the inner-city crime problem in the April 1983 issue of its magazine, *The Crisis*:

> Blacks make up . . . 12 percent of the nation's total population . . . an incredible 50 percent of the total prison population . . . [but] only 4 percent of the nation's law enforcement personnel. . . . Why are so many blacks in prison and . . . so few blacks in law enforcement? One inescapable answer applies to both questions: racism. Superficially, it would appear that blacks commit more crimes than anyone else . . . [but the] only explanation for this . . . discrepancy is conscious choices of key decision makers to focus on crimes committed more frequently by blacks.

If the common ideology of the black leadership is this reticent to express principled opposition to the damaging criminal behavior of a relatively few young black men, it simply does not serve the welfare of blacks.

Second, the "Because we're smart" argument cannot explain the ubiquitous coolness that nationally prominent black politicians exhibit toward the defense of American interests abroad. The most vulnerable segment of the American population to any major setback abroad are the black inner-city poor. If vital raw materials become scarce, who will suffer first and most? If markets abroad disappear, if trading partners can no longer afford to buy our goods, who will be unemployed? Of course, factors beyond the narrow interests of constituents should determine one's foreign policy positions. Still, the answers to these questions are sufficiently uncertain that those advocating the interests of the inner-city poor would do well to consider them carefully.

Again, they do not seem to be doing so, which only widens the schism between blacks and the American mainstream. It is unhealthy that NBC correspondent Marvin Kalb could feel obliged to ask Jesse Jackson, before a television audience of millions, whether his loyalties were first to America or first to black people—especially when the answer was the latter. When Jackson ended his speech at the University of Havana with "Long live Cuba! Long live the United States! Long Live President Castro! Long live Martin Luther King! Long live Martin Luther King! Long live Che Guevara! Long Live Patrice Lamumba!" the clear suggestion was that Martin Luther King's movement and Che Guevera's movement are on the same moral and political plane. Such cavalier use of King's moral legacy will only squander it. And yet while the rest of the electorate gasps, blacks seem to slumber.

To be sure, ordinary black people feel a genuine ambivalence about their American nationalism. Blacks find themselves in America only because their ancestors were kidnapped and brought here as slaves. In the century following emancipation, black artists and intellectuals—whose legacy continues to exert a powerful influence on educated young blacks—found they could only gain freedom of action and the recognition for their accomplishments by exiling themselves. The complicity of the federal and state governments in sustaining Jim Crow laws and the de facto system of racial caste, and the ubiquity of racist assumptions and practices throughout American life have left deep scars. There can be no forgetting that Martin Luther King Jr. was hounded as a suspected enemy of the state by the F.B.I., even as he was helping to effect the nation's great moral awakening. Today, when the Reagan Administration seems to flinch from condemning the ugly racism of South African apartheid, it makes many blacks even more reluctant to embrace fully their American nationalism.

THUS WHITE LEADERS too, if they do not seek to understand the nature and sources of black political alienation and respond sensitively to it, are in danger of making our racial dilemma worse. White Democrats and white Republicans who are elected to office without black support will be tempted, as all politicians are, to reward their friends (i.e., whites), and punish their enemies (i.e., blacks). If they succumb to this temptation, they will make it infinitely harder for black leaders to adopt positions that make mutual compromise and accommodation possible.

This is the great problem confronting President Reagan, as great in its own way as the deficit problem. Even in the absence of any short-term political gain, he must seek to reach out to the blacks and include them in his new majority. The President need not pretend to be a liberal Democrat. In a manner consistent with his social philosophy, he should act on the statement he made in 1982 to the National Black Republican Council: "No other experience in American history runs quite parallel to the black experience. It has been one of great hardships, but also of great heroism; of great adversity but also great

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achievement. What our Administration and our party seek is the day when the tragic side of the black legacy in America can be laid to rest once and for all, and the long, perilous voyage toward freedom, dignity, and opportunity can be completed, a day when every child born in America will live free not only of political injustice, but of fear, ignorance, prejudice, and dependency."

The President must recognize the damage that is done to the country by poor judgment in policy decisions of powerful symbolic importance. Two examples of this problem from Reagan's first term come to mind. The Administration appeared to support segregationist Bob Jones University in its efforts to gain a tax exemption; and it failed to give early support to a compromise version of the bill to extend the Voting Rights Act, and thus permitted itself to be portrayed as opposing the measure. Such mistakes served only to insult and further alienate a tenth of the population.

Reagan must also push with greater vigor and urgency those initiatives he already supports: enterprise zones, a sub-minimum wage for the hard-to-employ, ownership possibilities for responsible public housing tenants, and support for the development of a strong black entrepreneurial class. He has to show he is willing to take some risks, and make some compromises to see that these and other initiatives are enacted. In his first term the President seemed reluctant to appear before black audiences—perhaps because he feared an ugly reception. Yet, by taking blacks seriously enough to directly seek their support, he can take the lead in healing the country's racial wounds.

Should Reagan be prepared to take these steps, a historic opportunity will present itself to the black leadership. The black underclass cannot afford another four years of wishful thinking from its leaders about the drift of political ideas in contemporary America. Those leaders must find the courage and wisdom to heed the growing signs of racial political isolation, and to seek accommodation and compromise. They need not become conservative Republicans. What is required is that black leaders, from a mature and varied set of ideological positions, adopt strategies consonant with the shifting political realities. Until they do so, the new American dilemma will be perpetuated by blacks and whites alike.

How preferential treatment works against blacks.

AFFIRMATIVE RACISM

BY CHARLES MURRAY

A FEW YEARS AGO, I got into an argument with a lawyer friend who is a partner in a New York firm. I was being the conservative, arguing that preferential treatment of blacks was immoral; he was being the liberal, urging that it was the only way to bring blacks to full equality. In the middle of all this he abruptly said, "But you know, let's face it. We must have hired at least ten blacks in the last few years, and none of them has really worked out." He then returned to his case for still stronger affirmative action, while I wondered what it had been like for those ten blacks. And if he could make a remark like that so casually, what remarks would he be able to make some years down the road, if by that time it had been fifty blacks who hadn't "really worked out"?

My friend's comment was an outcropping of a new racism that is emerging to take its place alongside the old. It grows out of preferential treatment for blacks, and it is not just the much-publicized reactions, for example, of the white policemen or firemen who are passed over for promotion because of an affirmative action court order. The new racism that is potentially most damaging is located among the white elites—educated, affluent, and occupying the positions in education, business, and government from which this country is run. It currently focuses on blacks; whether it will eventually extend to include Hispanics and other minorities remains to be seen.

The new racists do not think blacks are inferior. They are typically longtime supporters of civil rights. But they exhibit the classic behavioral symptom of racism: they treat blacks differently from whites, because of their race. The results can be as concretely bad and unjust as any that the old racism produces. Sometimes the effect is that blacks are refused an education they otherwise could have gotten. Sometimes blacks are shunted into dead-end jobs. Always, blacks are denied the right to compete as equals.

The new racists also exhibit another characteristic of racism: they *think* about blacks differently from the way they think about whites. Their global view of blacks and

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civil rights is impeccable. Blacks must be enabled to achieve full equality. They are still unequal, through no fault of their own (it is the fault of racism, it is the fault of inadequate opportunity, it is the legacy of history). But the new racists' local view is that the blacks they run across professionally are not, on the average, up to the white standard. Among the new racists, lawyers have gotten used to the idea that the brief a black colleague turns in will be a little less well-rehearsed and argued than the one they would have done. Businessmen expect that a black colleague will not read a balance sheet as subtly as they do. Teachers expect black students to wind up toward the bottom of the class.

The new racists also tend to think of blacks as a commodity. The office must have a sufficient supply of blacks, who must be treated with special delicacy. The personnel problems this creates are more difficult than most because whites barely admit to themselves what's going on.

DRAWING BY MATT MAHURIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

What follows is a foray into very poorly mapped territory. I will present a few numbers that explain much about how the process gets started. But the ways that the numbers get translated into behavior are even more important. The cases I present are composites constructed from my own observations and taken from firsthand accounts. All are based on real events and real people, stripped of their particularities. But the individual cases are not intended as evidence, because I cannot tell you how often they happen. They have not been the kind of thing that social scientists or journalists have wanted to count. I am writing this because so many people, both white and black, to whom I tell such stories know immediately what I am talking about. It is apparent that a problem exists. How significant is it? What follows is as much an attempt to elicit evidence as to present it.

As in so many of the crusades of the 1960s, the nation began with a good idea. It was called "affirmative action," initiated by Lyndon Johnson through Executive Order 11246 in September 1965. It was an attractive label and a natural corrective to past racism: actively seek out black candidates for jobs, college, or promotions, without treating them differently in the actual decision to hire, admit, or promote. The term originally evoked both the letter and the spirit of the order.

Then, gradually, affirmative action came to mean something quite different. In 1970 a federal court established the legitimacy of quotas as a means of implementing Johnson's executive order. In 1971 the Supreme Court ruled that an employer could not use minimum credentials as a prerequisite for hiring if the credential acted as a "built-in headwind" for minority groups—even when there was no discriminatory intent and even when the hiring procedures were "fair in form." In 1972 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission acquired broad, independent enforcement powers.

Thus by the early 1970s it had become generally recognized that a good-faith effort to recruit qualified blacks was not enough—especially if one's school depended on federal grants or one's business depended on federal contracts. Even for businesses and schools not directly dependent on the government, the simplest way to withstand an accusation of violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was to make sure not that they had not just interviewed enough minority candidates, but that they had actually hired or admitted enough of them. Employers and admissions committees arrived at a rule of thumb: if the blacks who are available happen to be the best candidates, fine; if not, the best available black candidates will be given some sort of edge in the selection process. Sometimes the edge will be small; sometimes it will be predetermined that a black candidate is essential, and the edge will be very large.

Perhaps the first crucial place where the edge applies is in admission to college. Consider the cases of the following three students: John, William, and Carol, 17 years old and applying to college, are all equal on paper. Each has a score of 520 in the mathematics section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, which puts them in the top third—at the 67th percentile—of all students who took the test. (Figures are based on 1983 data.)

John is white. A score of 520 gets him into the state university. Against the advice of his high school counselor, he applies to a prestigious school, Ivy U. where his

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application is rejected in the first cut—its average white applicant has math scores in the high 600s.

William is black, from a middle-class family who sent him to good schools. His score of 520 puts him at the 95th percentile of all blacks who took the test. William's high school counselor points out that he could probably get into Ivy U. William applies and is admitted—Ivy U. uses separate standards for admission of whites and blacks, and William is among the top blacks who applied.

Carol is black, educated at an inner-city school, and her score of 520 represents an extraordinary achievement in the face of terrible schooling. An alumnus of Ivy U. who regularly looks for promising inner-city candidates finds her, recruits her, and sends her off with a full scholarship to Ivy U.

WHEN AMERICAN universities embarked on policies of preferential admissions by race, they had the Carols in mind. They had good reason to be optimistic that preferential treatment would work—for many years, the best universities had been weighting the test scores of applicants from small-town public schools when they were compared against those of applicants from the top private schools, and had been giving special breaks to students from distant states to ensure geographic distribution. The differences in preparation tended to even out after the first year or so. Blacks were being brought into a long-standing and successful tradition of preferential treatment.

In the case of blacks, however, preferential treatment ran up against a large black-white gap in academic performance combined with ambitious goals for proportional representation. This gap has been the hardest for whites to confront. But though it is not necessary or even plausible to believe that such differences are innate, it is necessary to recognize openly that the differences exist. By pretending they don't, we begin the process whereby both the real differences and the racial factor are exaggerated.

The black-white gap that applies most directly to this discussion is the one that separates blacks and whites who go to college. In 1983, for example, the mean Scholastic Aptitude Test score for all blacks who took the examination was more than 100 points below the white score on both the verbal and the math sections. Statistically, it is an extremely wide gap. To convert the gap into more concrete terms, think of it this way: in 1983, the same Scholastic Aptitude Test math score that put a black at the 50th percentile of all blacks who took the test put him at the 16th percentile of all whites who took the test.

These results clearly mean we ought to be making an all-out effort to improve elementary and secondary education for blacks. But that doesn't help much now, when an academic discrepancy of this magnitude is fed into a preferential admissions process. As universities scramble to make sure they are admitting enough blacks, the results feed the new racism. Here's how it works:

In 1983, only 66 black students nationwide scored above 700 in the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and only 205 scored above 700 in the mathematics section. This handful of students cannot begin to meet the demand for blacks with such scores. For example, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton have in recent years been bringing an aggregate of about 270 blacks into each entering class. If the black students entering these schools had the same distribution of scores as that of the freshman class as a whole, then every black student in the nation with a verbal score in the 700s, and roughly 70 percent of the ones with a math score in the 700s, would be in their freshman classes.

The main problem is not that a few schools monopolize the very top black applicants, but that these same schools have much larger implicit quotas than they can fill with those applicants. They fill out the rest with the next students in line—students who would not have gotten into these schools if they were not black, who otherwise would have been showing up in the classrooms of the nation's less glamorous colleges and universities. But the size of the black pool does not expand appreciably at the next levels. The number of blacks scoring in the 600s on the math section in 1983, for example, was 1,531. Meanwhile, 31,704 nonblack students in 1983 scored in the 700s on the math section and 121,640 scored in the 600s. The prestige schools cannot begin to absorb these numbers of other highly qualified freshmen, and they are perforce spread widely throughout the system.

AT SCHOOLS that draw most broadly from the student population, such as the large state universities, the effects of this skimming produce a situation that confirms the old racists in everything they want most to believe. There are plenty of outstanding students in such student bodies (at the University of Colorado, for example, 6 percent of the freshmen in 1981 had math scores in the 700s and 28 percent had scores in the 600s), but the skimming process combined with the very small raw numbers means that almost none of them are black. What students and instructors see in their day-to-day experience in the classroom is a disproportionate number of blacks who are below the white average, relatively few blacks who are at the white average, and virtually none who are in the first rank. The image that the white student carries away is that blacks are less able than whites.

I am not exalting the SAT as an infallible measure of academic ability, or pointing to test scores to try to convince anyone that blacks are performing below the level of whites. I am simply using them to explain what instructors and students already notice, and talk about, among themselves.

They do not talk openly about such matters. One characteristic of the new racism is that whites deny in public but acknowledge in private that there are significant differences in black and white academic performance. Another is that they dismiss the importance of tests when black scores are at issue, blaming cultural bias and saying that test scores are not good predictors of college performance. At the same time, they watch anxiously over their own children's test scores.

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The differences in academic performance do not disappear by the end of college. Far from narrowing, the gap separating black and white academic achievement appears to get larger. Various studies, most recently at Harvard, have found that during the 1970s blacks did worse in college (as measured by grade point average) than their test scores would have predicted. Moreover, the black-white gap in the Graduate Record Examination is larger than the gap in the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The gap between black and white freshmen is a bit less than one standard deviation (the technical measure for comparing scores). Black and white seniors who take the Graduate Record Examination reveal a gap of about one and a quarter standard deviations.

Why should the gap grow wider? Perhaps it is an illusion—for example, perhaps a disproportionate number of the best black students never take the examination. But there are also reasons for suspecting that in fact blacks get a worse education in college than whites do. Here are a few of the hypotheses that deserve full exploration.

TAKE THE SITUATION of William—a slightly above-average student who, because he is black, gets into a highly competitive school. William studies very hard during the first year. He nonetheless gets mediocre grades. He has a choice. He can continue to study hard and continue to get mediocre grades, and be seen by his classmates as a black who cannot do very well. Or he can explicitly refuse to engage in the academic game. He decides to opt out, and his performance gets worse as time goes on. He emerges from college with a poor education and is further behind the whites than he was as a freshman.

If large numbers of other black students at the institution are in the same situation as William, the result can be group pressure not to compete academically. (At Harvard, it is said, the current term among black students for a black who studies like a white is "incognegro.") The response is not hard to understand. If one subpopulation of students is conspicuously behind another population and is visibly identifiable, then the population that is behind must come up with a good excuse for doing poorly. "Not wanting to do better" is as good as any.

But there is another crucial reason why blacks might not close the gap with whites during college: they are not taught as well as whites are. Racist teachers impeding the progress of students? Perhaps, but most college faculty members I know tend to bend over backward to be "fair" to black students—and that may be the problem. I suggest that inferior instruction is more likely to be a manifestation of the new racism than the old.

Consider the case of Carol, with outstanding abilities but deprived of decent prior schooling: she struggles the first year, but she gets by. Her academic skills still show the aftereffects of her inferior preparation. Her instructors diplomatically point out the more flagrant mistakes, but they ignore minor lapses, and never push her in the aggressive way they push white students who have her intellectual capacity. Some of them are being patronizing (she is doing quite well, considering). Others are being prudent: teachers who criticize black students can find themselves being called racists in the classroom, in the campus newspaper, or in complaints to the administration.

The same process continues in graduate school. Indeed, because there are even fewer blacks in graduate schools than in undergraduate schools, the pressures to get black students through to the degree, no matter what, can be still greater. But apart from differences in preparation and ability that have accumulated by the end of schooling, the process whereby we foster the appearance of black inferiority continues. Let's assume that William did not give up during college. He goes to business school, where he gets his Masters degree. He signs up for interviews with the corporate recruiters. There are 100 persons in his class, and William is ranked near the middle. But of the 5 blacks in his class, he ranks first (remember that he was at the 95th percentile of blacks taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test). He is hired on his first interview by his first-choice company, which also attracted the very best of the white students. He is hired alongside 5 of the top-ranking white members of the class.

William's situation as one of 5 blacks in a class of 100 illustrates the proportions that prevail in business schools, and business schools are by no means one of the more extreme examples. The pool of black candidates for any given profession is a small fraction of the white pool. This works out to a 20-to-1 edge in business; it is even greater in most of the other professions. The result, when many hiring institutions are competing, is that a major gap between the abilities of new black and white employees in any given workplace is highly likely. Everyone needs to hire a few blacks, and the edge that "being black" confers in the hiring decision warps the sequence of hiring in such a way that a scarce resource (the blacks with a given set of qualifications) is exhausted at an artificially high rate, producing a widening gap in comparison with the remaining whites from which an employer can choose.

The more aggressively affirmative action is enforced, the greater the imbalance. In general, the first companies to hire can pursue strategies that minimize or even eliminate the difference in ability between the new black and white employees. IBM and Park Avenue law firms can do very well, just as Harvard does quite well in attracting the top black students. But the more effectively they pursue these strategies, the more quickly they strip the population of the best black candidates.

TO THIS POINT I have been discussing problems that are more or less driven by realities we have very little hope of manipulating in the short term except by discarding the laws regarding preferential treatment. People do differ in acquired abilities. Currently, acquired abilities in the white and black populations are distributed differently. Schools and firms do form a rough hierarchy when they draw from these distributions. The results follow ineluctably. The dangers they represent are not a matter of

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statistical probabilities, but of day-to-day human reactions we see around us.

The damage caused by these mechanistic forces should be much less in the world of work than in the schools, however. Schools deal in a relatively narrow domain of skills, and "talent" tends to be assigned specific meanings and specific measures. Workplaces deal in highly complex sets of skills, and "talent" consists of all sorts of combinations of qualities. A successful career depends in large part upon finding jobs that elicit and develop one's strengths.

At this point the young black professional must sidestep a new series of traps laid by whites who need to be ostentatiously nonracist. Let's say that William goes to work for the XYZ Corporation, where he is assigned with another management trainee (white) to a department where much of the time is spent preparing proposals for government contracts. The white trainee is assigned a variety of scut work—proofreading drafts, calculating the costs of minor items in the bid, making photocopies, taking notes at conferences. William gets more dignified work. He is assigned portions of the draft to write (which are later rewritten by more experienced staff), sits in on planning sessions, and even goes to Washington as a highly visible part of the team to present the bid. As time goes on, the white trainee learns a great deal about how the company operates, and is seen as a go-getting young member of the team. William is perceived to be a bright enough fellow, but not much of a detail man and not really much of a self-starter.

EVEN IF a black is hired under terms that put him on a par with his white peers, the subtler forms of differential treatment work against him. Particularly for any corporation that does business with the government, the new employee has a specific, immediate value purely because he is black. There are a variety of requirements to be met and rituals to be observed for which a black face is helpful. These have very little to do with the long-term career interests of the new employee; on the contrary, they often lead to a dead end as head of the minority-relations section of the personnel department.

Added to this is another problem that has nothing to do with the government. When the old racism was at fault (as it often still is), the newly hired black employee was excluded from the socialization process because the whites did not want him to become part of the group. When the new racism is at fault, it is because many whites are embarrassed to treat black employees as badly as they are willing to treat whites. Hence another reason that whites get on-the-job training that blacks do not: much of the early training of an employee is intertwined with menial assignments and mild hazing. Blacks who are put through these routines often see themselves as racially abused (and when a black is involved, old-racist responses may well have crept in). But even if the black is not unhappy about the process, the whites are afraid that he is, and so protect him from it. There are many variations, all having the same effect: the black is denied an apprenticeship that the white has no way of escaping. Without serving the apprenticeship, there is no way of becoming part of the team.

CAROL SUFFERS a slightly different fate. She and a white woman are hired as reporters by a major newspaper. They both work hard, but after a few months there is no denying it: neither one of them can write. The white woman is let go. Carol is kept on, because the paper cannot afford to have any fewer blacks than it already has. She is kept busy with reportorial work, even though they have to work around the writing problem. She is told not to worry—there's lots more to being a journalist than writing.

It is the mascot syndrome. A white performing at a comparable level would be fired. The black is kept on, perhaps to avoid complications with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (it can be very expensive to fire a black), perhaps out of a more diffuse wish not to appear discriminatory. Everybody pretends that nothing is wrong—but the black's career is at a dead end. The irony, of course, is that the white who gets fired and has to try something else has been forced into accepting a chance of making a success in some other line of work whereas the black is seduced into *not* taking the same chance.

Sometimes differential treatment takes an even more pernicious form: the conspiracy to promote a problem out of existence. As part of keeping Carol busy, the newspaper gives her some administrative responsibilities. They do not amount to much. But she has an impressive title on a prominent newspaper and she is black—a potent combination. She gets an offer from a lesser paper in another part of the country to take a senior editorial post. Her current employer is happy to be rid of an awkward situation and sends along glowing references. She gets a job that she is unequipped to handle—only this time, she is in a highly visible position, and within a few weeks the deficiencies that were covered up at the old job have become the subject of jokes all over the office. Most of the jokes are openly racist.

It is important to pause and remember who Carol is: an extremely bright young woman, not (in other circumstances) a likely object of condescension. But being bright is no protection. Whites can usually count on the market to help us recognize egregious career mistakes and to prevent us from being promoted too far from a career line that fits our strengths, and too far above our level of readiness. One of the most prevalent characteristics of white differential treatment of blacks has been to exempt blacks from these market considerations, substituting for them a market premium attached to race.

The most obvious consequence of preferential treatment is that every black professional, no matter how able, is tainted. Every black who is hired by a white-run organization that hires blacks preferentially has to put up with the knowledge that many of his co-workers believe he was hired because of his race; and he has to put up with the suspicion in his own mind that they might be right.

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Whites are curiously reluctant to consider this a real problem—it is an abstraction, I am told, much less important than the problem that blacks face in getting a job in the first place. But black professionals talk about it, and they tell stories of mental breakdowns; of people who had to leave the job altogether; of long-term professional paralysis. What white would want to be put in such a situation? Of course it would be a constant humiliation to be resented by some of your co-workers and condescended to by others. Of course it would affect your perceptions of yourself and your self-confidence. No system that produces such side effects—as preferential treatment *must* do—can be defended unless it is producing some extremely important benefits.

AND THAT BRINGS us to the decisive question. If the alternative were no job at all, as it was for so many blacks for so long, the resentment and condescension are part of the price of getting blacks into the positions they deserve. But is that the alternative today? If the institutions of this country were left to their own devices now, to what extent would they refuse to admit, hire, and promote people because they were black? To what extent are American institutions kept from being racist by the government's intervention?

It is another one of those questions that are seldom investigated aggressively, and I have no evidence. Let me suggest a hypothesis that bears looking into: that the signal event in the struggle for black equality during the last thirty years, the one with real impact, was not the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or Executive Order 11246 or any other governmental act. It was the civil rights movement itself. It raised to a pitch of acute and lasting discomfort the racial consciousness of the generations of white Americans who are now running the country. I will not argue that the old racism is dead at any level of society. I will argue, however, that in the typical corporation or in the typical admissions office, there is an abiding desire to be not-racist. This need not be construed as brotherly love. Guilt will do as well. But the civil rights movement did its job. I suggest that the laws and the court decisions and the continuing intellectual respectability behind preferential treatment are not holding many doors open to qualified blacks that would otherwise be closed.

Suppose for a moment that I am right. Suppose that, for practical purposes, racism would not get in the way of blacks if preferential treatment were abandoned. How, in my most optimistic view, would the world look different?

There would be fewer blacks at Harvard and Yale; but they would all be fully competitive with the whites who were there. White students at the state university would encounter a cross-section of blacks who span the full range of ability, including the top levels, just as whites do. College remedial courses would no longer be disproportionately black. Whites rejected by the school they wanted would quit assuming they were kept out because a less-qualified black was admitted in their place. Blacks in big corporations would no longer be shunted off to personnel-relations positions, but would be left on the main-line tracks toward becoming comptrollers and sales managers and chief executive officers. Whites would quit assuming that black colleagues had been hired because they were black. Blacks would quit worrying that they had been hired because they were black.

Would blacks still lag behind? As a population, yes, for a time, and the nation should be mounting a far more effective program to improve elementary and secondary education for blacks than it has mounted in the last few decades. But in years past virtually every ethnic group in America has at one time or another lagged behind as a population, and has eventually caught up. In the process of catching up, the ones who breached the barriers were evidence of the success of that group. Now blacks who breach the barriers tend to be seen as evidence of the inferiority of that group.

AND THAT IS the evil of preferential treatment. It perpetuates an impression of inferiority. The system segments whites and blacks who come in contact with each other so as to maximize the likelihood that whites have the advantage in experience and ability. The system then encourages both whites and blacks to behave in ways that create self-fulfilling prophecies even when no real differences exist.

It is here that the new racism links up with the old. The old racism has always openly held that blacks are permanently less competent than whites. The new racism tacitly accepts that, in the course of overcoming the legacy of the old racism, blacks are temporarily less competent than whites. It is an extremely fine distinction. As time goes on, fine distinctions tend to be lost. Preferential treatment is providing persuasive evidence for the old racists, and we can already hear it *sotto voce*: "We gave you your chance, we let you educate them and push them into jobs they couldn't have gotten on their own and coddle them every way you could. And see: they still aren't as good as whites, and you are beginning to admit it yourselves." Sooner or later this message is going to be heard by a white elite that needs to excuse its failure to achieve black equality.

The only happy aspect of the new racism is that the corrective—to get rid of the policies encouraging preferential treatment—is so natural. Deliberate preferential treatment by race has sat as uneasily with America's equal-opportunity ideal during the post-1965 period as it did during the days of legalized segregation. We had to construct tortuous rationalizations when we permitted blacks to be kept on the back of the bus—and the rationalizations to justify sending blacks to the head of the line have been just as tortuous. Both kinds of rationalization say that sometimes it is all right to treat people of different races in different ways. For years, we have instinctively sensed this was wrong in principle but intellectualized our support for it as an expedient. I submit that our instincts were right. There is no such thing as good racial discrimination. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Odd Man In

Once past the incredible and violent opening of *Beverly Hills Cop*, which is tedious, we get the incredible and violent bulk of the picture, which is mostly entertaining. The dialogue, by Daniel Petrie Jr., becomes springy. The familiar story idea is turned to good contemporary use.

Beverly Hills Cop
(Paramount)

The Times of Harvey Milk
• (Teleculture)

That story idea is a Movieland antique. The hero is a smart but unorthodox detective. A friend of his is murdered, and the hero's chief warns him not to take revenge on his own. Guess whether the hero obeys.

However—and this is the contemporary use—the hero is played by Eddie Murphy. His blackness alters the tenor of every scene, and the fact that this particular black man is a comedian alters the tenor even further. This retelling of a good old yarn doesn't mock the motives of loyalty and honor on which it has always been based, but the presence of Murphy in the lead takes the suspense down several pegs—it's much less likely that a comic will get killed than, say, Nick Nolte—and it turns the usually noble plot into a series of skits in which a clever, brave, cool, funny black man outwits both the hoods and his white colleagues.

Thus this seemingly routine "lone cop" film becomes, to some degree, a modern racial apotheosis. An enjoyable one, too. Murphy, scintillatingly talented, gets plenty of chance to scintillate. And all of us get pleasure in seeing—at least for the duration of the film—some historic imbalances slightly righted. This is only Murphy's third film (except for a misguided cameo in something called *Best Defense*), and, up to now, he has made a career out of social reversals. His first appearance, in *48 HRS.*, where he scored a smashing hit, was as a convict whose help was so badly needed by a detective that he had to be let out of jail. In *Trading Places*, he upset apple carts as a panhandler who became a financial whiz. His new film is constructed to let him upset other apple carts.

First, he is not a Beverly Hills cop, he is a Detroit cop—a detective who wears casual street clothes so that he can go underground in search of crime. His trail of personal (and disobedient) revenge leads him to Beverly Hills where all the detectives wear three-piece suits, including the black one. To Murphy's defiance of his Detroit chief and his difference of dress in B. H. is added still another revolt: he's ordered out of town by the B. H. police, and he disobeys that order, too. Further, he lures several local detectives into aiding him in his quest. All these anarchies are justified—he is proved right about the respectable man he accuses of being an archcriminal—but a twist at the end hints at possible further anarchy.

Murphy's talent and success underscore a startling fact: in the entire history of American film, there have been only three black stars, and two of them, both currently working, are comedians. Before Richard Pryor and Murphy, the only black star was Sidney Poitier. Obviously there have been famous and popular black actors—Louise Beavers, Hattie McDaniel, and Clarence Muse, to name only three. Some black actors have been billed and treated as stars—Diana Ross, Cicely Tyson, Billy Dee Williams, Jim Brown, for example—but none of them had the drawing power and longevity of stars. Poitier was the first real black star, rising perhaps on the surge of interest in integration during the 1960s but certainly not merely lucky: he was an extraordinarily taking and forceful actor who was primarily serious. Now comes the rise of two comic stars when —coincidentally?— integration and affirmative action have become more problematic issues. Pryor has shown in his one-man films that he can create and perform scathing satire; in his other films he has done subtle acting. Neither of these qualities is so far visible in Murphy's screen career, but he has mercurial imagination, a fine cartoonist's ability to sketch varied types (something he does often), geysers of vitality, and a wide-grinning personality—almost aggressively pleasant but so well supported by talent that what seems grinning defiance transmutes into our own wide grin. He joins Pryor as one of the two reigning film blacks, both of them mockers of the status quo.

Martin Brest, the director, has made two previous films. I missed the first. His second, about three aged bank robbers and called *Going in Style*, went in very little style. This time Brest has his film firmly in hand and whips it along concisely. Yes, in the last shootout, dozens of machine-gun rounds are fired at the good guys who are out in the open yet are never touched. But who's complaining? In a picture like this, do we want to see good guys killed?

Note: The archcriminal is played by Steven Berkoff, who has been a prominent

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Bizet's Carmen. The best "straight" film version of an opera I know, cinematically fluent and gorgeous. Francesco Rosi directed superbly: Julia Migenes-Johnson is an archetypal *femme fatale*. (Reviewed 10/1/84)

The Case Is Closed. The twenty-second film by the Bengali, Mrinal Sen, yet his first to be theatrically released here. A muted, strong tale of the effect on a Calcutta family of a servant's accidental death. (12/24/84)

Falling in Love. For those who have fallen in love with Meryl Streep, or are susceptible. Robert De Niro, too, for that matter. One more go-round about somebody's husband and somebody else's wife, but romantically done. (12/10/84)

Stranger than Paradise. Tart, witty, insidious. Three young people, two of them Hungarian immigrants, float on an underground stream of American life. (10/29/84)

SK

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figure in the English avant-garde theater since 1968 and who has done some theater work in this country, including a production of *Agamemnon* for the recent Olympic Arts Festival. I mention these facts because this unconventional theater man gives here a quite conventional film performance. Presumably his mind and heart were elsewhere.

The Times of Harvey Milk is a strong documentary by Robert Epstein and Richard Schmiechen about the avowedly gay San Francisco city official who was killed along with Mayor George Moscone on November 27, 1978. Because the two victims and their killer, Dan White, were all in politics, enough TV footage was available to show us a good deal of these people before that gruesome day. Epstein and Schmiechen have interwoven this footage and other material with eight interviews of people who knew Milk. Three of them give special poignancy to the story. A lesbian speech professor, dignified and intelligent, speaks lucidly about her affection for Milk and her shock. A young woman who was a consultant for Milk when he ran for office chatters with touching offhandedness about how surprised she was to find such strength and truth in him. And, perhaps most moving of all, a union official, virtually a hard-hat caricature, confesses how he would have approved of queer-bashing before he knew Milk and how knowing Milk changed his views.

White, a member of the Board of Supervisors with Milk, resigned his seat, nominally for financial reasons; but presumably he was upset both because the Board had passed a gay rights bill and because an antigay statewide proposition had been defeated. The day after he resigned, White changed his mind and asked to be reappointed. Milk opposed the request, and Mayor Moscone agreed. That day White committed the killings. The story is puzzling. It's easy to understand how White crawled through an open window to avoid the metal detector at the City Hall front door, which would have caught his pistol and his extra ammunition, but after he went into the mayor's office and fired several shots, he took time to reload his pistol, then walked down a long hall to Milk's office. Didn't anyone hear those first shots? Were there no assistants or secretaries outside the mayor's private office? How could there have been no interference in the time it took to reload and walk down the hall? If there is evidence on these points, the film doesn't include it.

Nor does the film include much on White's trial itself, in which he pleaded guilty by reason of diminished mental capacity, before and during the shootings, partly because of eating too much junk food. For the two killings, White was then sentenced to seven and a half years for involuntary manslaughter (and was released after five years). One interviewee in the film says that if White had killed only Mayor Moscone, he would have been given a life term. This is not provable. Neither is it disprovable.

THE COMPLEAT UTOPIAN

William Godwin: Philosopher, Novelist, Revolutionary by Peter H. Marshall

(Yale University Press, 352 pp., $30)

In this year of Orwell, it is appropriate to consider yet another word that has been "Orwellianized"—trivialized and generalized until it has come to mean almost the opposite of what it once meant. This is the word "utopian." We tend to think of it as signifying an ideal that is commendable if not entirely realistic, a goal to aspire to, a vision of excellence that leads us, if not to the best, then at least to the better. It is a benign and innocent image the word conjures up—and a totally false one. For it obscures the very nature of the utopian impulse, the yearning for perfection that makes reality seem irredeemably flawed. In the face of so large a discrepancy between the ideal and the real, nothing less will suffice than a total transformation of reality—of society, the polity, the economy, above all, of human nature.

"In modern America there are no 'working class' cars, washing machines, video recorders,

or even, with some exceptions concentrated on the young, styles of dress. In an urban department store or suburban shopping mall it is hard to know if a customer has a blue- or white-collar occupation."

In AMERICA'S WORKING MAN, David Halle creates a compelling portrait of blue-collar workers in a New Jersey chemical plant. Talking to these workers on the job, in taverns, in their homes, on fishing trips, he documents their views on everything from politics, job security, marriage and adultery, God and life after death, to the World Series.

As he reports, while on the job these men regard themselves as definitely blue-collar workers—what's more, as the only *real* workers. They have scant respect for professionals, and none at all for office workers. Off the job, however, they do not consider themselves members of a "working class." They feel free, within the limits of income—to live where they choose and to pursue the same leisure activities as those who do not dirty their hands at work.

America's Working Man

DAVID HALLE

Illus. $24.95

University of **CHICAGO** Press
5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago IL 60637

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There are utopians and utopians, to be sure. The word "utopia" was first coined by Thomas More, who was perhaps the least utopian of them all. The title of his book, *Utopia*, gave notice that he was describing "no place," that his visionary society was just that, an imaginary construct meant to dramatize ideas, not a blueprint for an ideal and potentially real society. And the other conspicuously Greek neologisms in this Latin book also testified to its fancifulness: the river Andryus meaning "hot water," the philosopher Hythlodaeus, "dispenser of nonsense," the magistrate Ademus, "not people." Later utopians, products of the Enlightenment, were less modest than More. Believing in the infinite power of human reason, they were confident that everything rational was realizable; all that was needed was to conceive the good and will it into existence, or await its realization in the course of the necessary progress of history. Their utopias, so far from being located in a never-never world, were designed for a real place (as in the communities of Fourier and Owen), a real time (as in the historical schemes of Condorcet, Saint-Simon, and Comte), and real people (as in Godwin's species of totally rational human beings).

WILLIAM Godwin was perhaps the most ambitious utopian of all—so ambitious that he would have spurned the label. He did not compose a prospectus for a new society nor an outline of the stages of history. Instead he presented his ideas in the form of a science of politics, from which he deduced principles which were absolutely valid and universally applicable, and which irrefutably demonstrated "the one best mode of social existence" for all of mankind. Published in two volumes in 1793, his work had the appropriately imposing title, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*. Its basic premise was the perfectibility of mankind, the development of human beings who were, potentially, perfectly rational and moral and, therefore, perfectly free and equal.

If perfectibility had so far eluded mankind, Godwin argued, it was only because of the corrupting and coercive effect of government. While monarchy was the worst form of government, it was not this or that form of government that was evil; it was government as such. Even the most democratic government was unjust because its characteristic and commonly admired features—the separation and balance of powers, representation, elections, voting, the ballot—violated either reason or liberty or both. For the same reasons all the institutions created and sanctioned by government were unjust: constitutions, laws, courts, contracts, juries, punishments, prisons, private property, marriage, the family, religion, schools. And so, too, all collective or cooperative enterprises of any kind, whether voluntary or compulsory: work that required some form of organization, social clubs, musical concerts, theatrical performances.

LIBERATED from these oppressive and corrupting institutions, mankind would be rational and virtuous, free and equal. There would be no passion or prejudice to inhibit the intellect, no error or falsehood to stand in the way of truth, no self-love or self-interest to interfere with benevolence, no acquisitiveness or competitiveness to undermine equality, no coercion or cooperation to restrict individuality. Without marriage or any other contracts or promises to bind them to a future course of action ("to disarm my future wisdom by my past folly"), individuals would be free and rational at every moment of their lives. And without families to divert them from their higher obligations, they would be free to devote themselves to humanity at large.

Toward the end of the book, contemplating the inventions that would enable one man to do alone what now required the cooperative effort of many, thus doing away with the evil of "common labour" (and doing away with most individual labor as well, since half an hour a day would suffice to provide all of a person's needs), Godwin cited the "conjecture" of Benjamin Franklin that "mind would one day become omnipotent over matter." That conjecture suggested to Godwin the bolder one that mind would become omnipotent over bodily matter as well. "If volition can now do something, why should it not go on to do still more and more?" If it could cure all our social ills, why not our physical and mental ills? And why should it not, finally, result in the "total extirpation of the infirmities of our nature"—disease, sleep, languor, anguish, melancholy, resentment?

There was still another infirmity that would be extirpated once the omnipotence of mind established itself, and that was sexuality. In the opening paragraph of the book, Godwin had asserted, as a self-evident principle, "that the happiness of the human species is the most desirable object for human science to promote; and that intellectual and moral happiness or pleasure is extremely to be preferred to those which are precarious and transitory." By the end of the book it appeared that among the most precarious and transitory, and hence least desirable, pleasures were those of sex. "The tendency of a cultivated and virtuous mind is to render us indifferent to the gratification of sense," and especially to sensory gratification of a "mere animal function." Thus an enlightened mankind could look forward to the diminution and eventual elimination of sexuality. Lest this happy state of affairs result, as it inevitably would, in the depopulation of the earth, Godwin introduced an even bolder suggestion: that men might become immortal. He did not commit himself to immortality as a certainty, only as a real possibility; what was certain was the infinite prolongation of life. It was this combination of celibacy and immortality, or near-immortality, that inspired the most memorable passage in the book, the image of a world in a permanent condition of perfection because it was in a permanent state of maturity.

> The men therefore who exist when the earth shall refuse itself to a more extended population, will cease to propagate, for they will no longer have any motive, either of error or duty, to induce them. In addition to this they will perhaps be immortal. The whole will be a people of men, and not of children. Generation will not succeed generation, nor truth have in a certain degree to recommence her career at the end of every thirty years.

After this Edenic vision of mankind purged of all the imperfections of human nature, to say nothing of all political and social evils, it was anticlimactic to be told that these were matters of "probable conjecture" which did not affect the truth of the "grand argument" of the rest of the book. This disclaimer, coming in the final sentence of the chapter, was too belated and too feeble to diminish the effect of the dramatic image of mankind in a perfect state of reason and virtue.

Any resemblance between this Godwin and that presented in the biography by Peter H. Marshall is purely coincidental. The details, and even many of the quotations, are the same, but the to-

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tality is quite different. Marshall's Godwin is no utopian but a philosopher and humanist on a par with "Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Mill." And *Political Justice*, so far from being the work of an "idle visionary," offers nothing more visionary than the idea that everyone is capable of improvement and that "education and enlightenment could bring about a better order of things on earth."

THE admiring biographer is not troubled by difficulties and inconsistencies that might occur to the ordinary reader of Godwin: the individual so solicitous of his own freedom that he cannot commit himself to another in marriage, who is prepared to submerge his own self for the "love of my species"; or a utilitarianism that deplores self-interest while placing the highest value on altruism; or an altruism so suspicious of anything short of disinterested, universal benevolence that it would abolish the family itself; or a hedonism that condemns sensuality and sexuality; or a mechanistic philosophy that is also rationalistic and voluntaristic; or a devotion to absolute truth at the expense of humaneness or even self-preservation (a dying woman should be told the news of her husband's death, and the "whitest" of lies is unjustified even to save one's life); or the renunciation of all forms of punishment on the grounds that there is no free will, hence no personal responsibility, hence no crime or guilt ("the assassin cannot help the murder he commits any more than the dagger"); or a communism that eschews all forms of voluntary cooperation and all institutional mechanisms to ensure the equal distribution of property; or a libertarianism that makes each individual the "ingenuous censor" of his neighbor by means of a moral suasion "not less irresistible than whips and chains"; or a concept of "political justice" that does away with a need for any kind of polity or any administration of justice; or a humanism that would like to "extirpate" much of human nature as we know it, including sex, emotion, parental love, even parental identity. (In the perfect society it may not be known who the father of a child is, but such knowledge will be of "no importance.")

To Marshall none of this is a serious problem, certainly not serious enough to detract from the claim that Godwin was a metaphysician, a psychologist, a political theorist, and a moral philosopher of the first order. Godwin's vision of a "free and equal society," we are told, derived from the "Greek notion of individual self-fulfillment"—and was presumably superior to the Greek notion because it did not require anything as oppressive as the polis. He was said to have been a better utilitarian than Bentham (because he had a more subtle idea of pleasure), and a better liberal than Mill (because he carried liberalism to the point of anarchism). Like Rousseau, he was a humanist who wanted to produce "the whole person who would make the ideal society"—a whole person unencumbered by sex or "personal affections," and an ideal society without government, laws, churches, or families, indeed a society that was nothing more, Godwin said, than an "aggregation of individuals." It is this Godwin who is recommended to us as peculiarly relevant today. "Above all, he speaks directly to the new radicalism which had emerged in the last decade which seeks a libertarian way between the bureaucratic centralism of Communist states and the organized lovelessness of the capitalist world."

One of the difficulties in this glowing account is the fact that in some measure it would seem to be belied by Godwin himself, who felt it necessary to make numerous changes in his work in later editions. These changes, he insisted, did not alter the basic thesis, but only clarified and improved it. Yet they inevitably call attention to some of the more dubious aspects of that thesis. Thus in the revised edition of 1796, he reaffirmed the principle of perfectibility while stopping short of predicting, as part of that movement toward perfection, the elimination of sleep, disease, and death. He also qualified (in the third edition of 1798 even more than in the second) his earlier condemnation of feelings, private affections, and sensual pleasures, and even conceded that marriage, while still the "worst" (no longer the "most odious") of all monopolies, could be a "salutatory and respectable institution" on condition that it allowed for liberty and "repentance" (presumably divorce). If these changes make the work seem less extreme, they also weaken, and at points even contradict, the original thesis. They also make it more difficult to praise the first edition so fulsomely while approving of all the later emendations.

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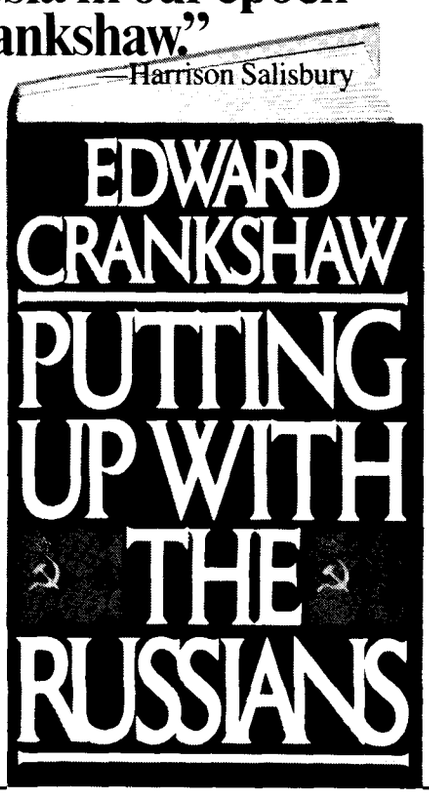

VIKING Elisabeth Sifton Books

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Godwin was 37 when *Political Justice* was first published—37, as we now say, going on 17. However wary one may be of the kind of reductivism that accounts for ideas in terms of personal experiences, one can hardly avoid noting that it was a celibate who wrote so contemptuously of sex; a loner and drifter who had so little respect for social affections and associations; a man with no love for his own family who was prepared to abolish the family; a former member of a sect that made reason the source of religious salvation who later made reason the primary qualification for human and social redemption.

THE religious passion in atheism, the messianic zeal in radicalism, are familiar enough, but rarely are they so demonstrable as in the case of Godwin. Godwin himself later explained the depreciation of feeling in *Political Justice* as the lingering effect of "Sandemanianism," a form of Calvinism that located salvation neither in good works nor in faith but rather in a rational understanding of divine truth. It was this rationalistic doctrine, hostile to emotion and affection and with a strong egalitarian bias, that dominated much of Godwin's early life and persisted even after he, at the age of 17, entered a liberal Dissenting academy to prepare for the ministry.

Within a year after leaving the academy, Godwin rapidly moved from Sandemanianism to deism, and from Toryism to republicanism. Yet for five years he tried to establish himself as a minister, going from one congregation to another and being dismissed by one after the other. Finally, in 1783, at the age of 27, he settled in London to make a career as a writer. By 1791 he had been sufficiently productive to receive an advance of one thousand guineas for a book on "Political Principles." Two years later the two volumes of *Political Justice* appeared, and Godwin suddenly found himself famous.

It is impossible to think of *Political Justice*, certainly it is impossible to account for its success, apart from the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution. One winces now at those all too familiar lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude*: "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,/But to be young was very Heaven!" But they do express the powerful attraction of the French Revolution—"the attraction of a country in romance!"—and of a philosophy like Godwin's eminently attuned to that Revolution, a philosophy in romance. The prospect of being liberated from "the meager, stale, forbidding ways/Of custom, law, and statute," of being free to follow Reason, that "prime enchantress," was especially appealing to the young. Of the poets who were enraptured by *Political Justice* when it first appeared, Wordsworth was 23, Southey 19, and Coleridge 21. (William Hazlitt, who retained his enthusiasm for the book long after the others, was all of 15 at the time.)

What is remarkable is not that Godwin's "Fantasy of Reason" (the title of another recent biography of him) appealed to those for whom the French Revolution gave promise of a new heavenly city on earth, but that it did so at a time when the Revolution itself was beginning to lose its appeal. By February 1793, when *Political Justice* was published, the Revolution was becoming an embarrassment even for some of its more ardent English defenders. The execution of the King in January and the declaration of war against England had put English Jacobins in a difficult position; and they became harder pressed in the following months with the extension of the war, the creation of the Revolutionary Tribunal and Committee of Public Safety, and the execution of the Queen and the Girondins. But the romance of revolution, of social rejuvenation, dies hard; and the romance of reason, of a "human nature seeming born again" (Wordsworth once more), dies harder still.

SO IT was that Godwin's book was at first hailed as a masterpiece. Three thousand copies of the two volumes were sold at the considerable price of three guineas. The price may have saved it from being proscribed; Pitt is reputed to have said that it could do no harm to those "who had not three shillings to spare." Although it did reach some of the poor in cheaper pirated editions and in extracts in collections of radical writings, it had its greatest success among intellectuals. By 1796, however, when the second edition was published, and still more by the time of the third edition in 1798, the shift in the climate of opinion caught up with Godwin, and some of his most ardent admirers became his most bitter critics.

By then another kind of reality had caught up with Godwin. When he fell in love with Mary Wollstonecraft in 1796, he was 40 and she 37. He was unattractive, ungainly, socially ill at ease, and sexually inexperienced (this was his first affair and possibly his first sexual experience). She was handsome, buxom, gregarious, and, by reputation, promiscuous. She was also as celebrated a writer as he was; her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, a reply to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, established her credentials as a radical, and her *Vindications of the Rights of Women* made her the first serious feminist. Her most recent affair had left her with an illegitimate child, and it was after she was abandoned by her lover and had tried (for the second time) to commit suicide that she became involved with Godwin. Godwin himself, having just published the second edition of his book deploring the irrationality of emotions, the immorality of private affections, and the puerility of sex, took to writing love letters that are almost a parody of the form, and he carefully recorded the consummation of his love in his diary: "*Chez moi, toute.*"

Since both of them had made such a large point of condemning marriage, that "most odious of all monopolies," they carried on their affair openly while maintaining separate lodgings. The scandal was not their liaison but their marriage the following year, decided upon after she became pregnant and apparently upon her urging. In spite of occasional complaints on her part that he was lacking in affection, the marriage was apparently happy for both of them. And there is no question but that he was genuinely desolate when she died soon after giving birth to their daughter Mary. Their celebrated relationship (which feminists today regard as his principal claim to fame) had lasted all of one year.

A FEW YEARS AFTER Wollstonecraft's death, having discovered the pleasures of sex and of the private affections—and having revised *Political Justice* accordingly—Godwin entered into another marriage with another Mary. This was far less happy and much longer lived. In addition to an uncongenial wife, he acquired two new stepchildren (also, apparently, illegitimate), a son, William, and financial obligations which he found difficult to meet.

His greatest satisfaction came from his strikingly pretty and precocious daughter Mary. But she was also the cause of his greatest distress. She was

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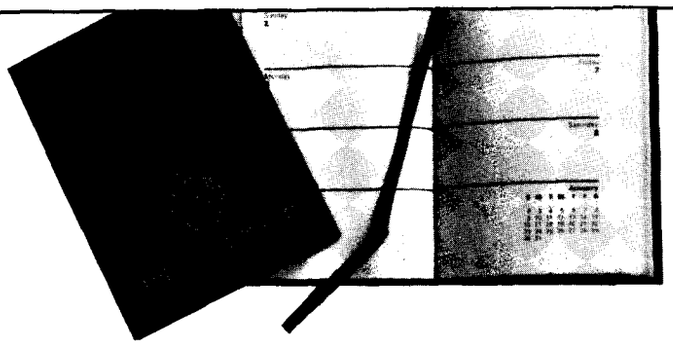
16 when Shelley—then 22, married and a father, and already cutting a romantic figure as a poet, novelist, atheist, and radical—moved into the Godwin household to escape his debtors and promptly fell in love with her, as she did with him. When Godwin was told of this, his outrage at this "licentious love" was compounded by the fear that people might accuse him of having sold his daughter to Shelley. (Although Shelley was in debt at the time, he was heir to a substantial fortune and had given Godwin large sums of money.) Shelley promised at first to give up Mary, then reneged and proposed a *menage à trois* (his wife was about to have their second child), then came to Godwin's house brandishing a pistol and a bottle of laudanum and threatening to commit suicide together with Mary. A few days later Shelley and Mary eloped—accompanied by Jane (Mary's stepsister and Mrs. Godwin's daughter).

THIS was the beginning of a bizarre saga in which money figured almost as prominently as sex. While Godwin refused to see either his daughter or Shelley and resolutely ignored the births of their children, he continued to demand more money from Shelley, who, at first obligingly and then grudgingly, gave it to him. In the meantime Shelley, Mary, and Jane traveled and lived together. It is not clear whether Shelley was also having an affair with Jane (who, to complicate matters, decided to change her name to Claire), when she became involved with Byron and bore his child. About the same time Fanny (Wollstonecraft's first daughter) committed suicide, apparently because of her unrequited love for Shelley. A month later Harriet, Shelley's wife, also committed suicide in an advanced state of pregnancy, having been abandoned by her lover. A month after that Shelley and Mary were married and Godwin was finally reconciled to them. It was a good match, he informed his brother, not that he himself cared about money or title (he carefully identified Shelley as "the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, of Field Place, in the county of Sussex, Baronet"), but only because he wanted his daughter to be "respectable, virtuous, and contented." He was also pleased to attend the christening in church of his grandchildren.

That was not, however, the end of the tale. Two years after the marriage,



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Claire gave birth to Shelley's child (who was registered as Mary's). The following year Mary wrote a short novel about incest (with obvious autobiographical intimations) which she sent to Godwin for his opinion. He told her that he thought parts of it were well done but found the subject so "disgusting and detestable" that he refused to return the manuscript in spite of her repeated requests. (The book was only published posthumously.) After Shelley's death in 1822, Mary continued to write novels and became increasingly conservative as she grew older. When a friend advised her to send her only surviving son to a school where they would teach him to think for himself, she replied, "For heaven's sake, let him learn to think like everyone else!" Thus the son of Shelley and the grandson of Godwin (his last descendant) went to Harrow and Trinity College, became a lawyer, a Member of Parliament, and a respectable patron of letters—achieving the respectability Godwin had wanted for his own daughter.

ALL OF this would make for a dramatic enough story even if the protagonists were not who they were. But it is all the more dramatic with this cast of characters, and all the more in conjunction with Godwin's ideas. For his life—first his marriage with Wollstonecraft, then his second unhappy marriage, then the Shelley saga—was a cruel commentary on his theories. It was said at the time that Shelley was only carrying out the teachings of Godwin, that libertinism was the consequence of libertarianism, and promiscuity of free love. Shelley, no doubt, would have carried on as he did without the inspiration of *Political Justice*, but he did profess, publicly as well as privately, the greatest admiration for that book, which was why he so generously subsidized its author.

What makes the situation even more ironic is the fact that Godwin himself, long before Shelley entered his life, had begun to modify or discard one after another of his original doctrines (without, to be sure, repudiating *Political Justice* itself). By the time they met, in 1812, he had gone so far as to criticize a pamphlet in which Shelley, echoing *Political Justice*—"when all men are good and wise, government will of itself decay"—called upon the Irish to repeal the Union with England and to form political associations preparatory to their emancipation from government itself. Reminding Shelley that he was against all associations, including radical ones, Godwin went on to praise some notably conservative ones.

> Every institution and form of society is good in its place and the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of Popery and the monastic institutions in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour. To them we owe almost all our logic and literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view nothing perhaps can be more worthy of our applause than the English Constitution.

In his last major work, *History of the Commonwealth*, he came close to refuting perfectibility itself. It was easy, he said, for "the philosopher in his closet to invent imaginary schemes of policy, and to show how mankind, if they were without passions and without prejudices, might best be united in the form of a political community"; unfortunately men are always "creatures of passions," defying the "dictates of sobriety and speculation."

A kindly biographer, Marshall treats the last half of Godwin's life with sympathy rather than contempt. But his final words pay tribute to the early Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*: "an authentic human being, a truly creative writer, and one of the great humanists in the Western tradition." It is an equivocal compliment, for it exalts the "humanist" who had so little respect for the "infirmities" of human nature and human society, and it belittles the human being whose mature experiences and reflections are deemed to be of so little merit.

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

Gertrude Himmelfarb is the author most recently of *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (Knopf).

THE MESS OF MOTHER RUSSIA

The Burn
by Vassily Aksyonov
translated by Michael Glenny

(Random House, 528 pp., $18.95)

Much of the effect of literary art depends on a kind of inside knowledge, on the reverberations of personal association. We miss a lot even in the thoroughly explicated plays of Shakespeare; and even such relatively simple works as *Babbitt* certainly appear richer to a Midwestern contemporary of Lewis than to a high school girl studying American literature in Peking. Still, more than enough remains in a great book like *The Canterbury Tales*, for instance, to make it a best-seller in Prague in the early 1950s—although that book's appeal for the Czechs lay, admittedly, not just in the work's intrinsic value, but also in its side delights. "The Miller's Tale," unexpurgated because it was a classic, was a rare, juicy morsel for readers starving on a diet of novels in which, if a newlywed Stakhanovite wanted to indicate to her husband that he had brought her into an interesting condition, she had to lead him under a blossoming cherry tree, point out a nestful of newly hatched birds, and blush.

At the beginning of Aksyonov's immensely rich novel, a sexy Muscovite—the females of that cynical city blush only on the pages of prizewinning Soviet novels; in Aksyonov's book they fuck like mad—brings the scientist Aristarkh Apollinarievich Kunitser a glass container swarming with drosophila flies. I wonder how much is lost here on a young American reader who never studied Soviet history. For me the entire stunning inferno of *The Burn* is embodied in this tiny fruit fly. In the opening pages of the book, it functions like Proust's madeleine. I remember well the article in the Charles University student newspaper in which the author skillfully built up the tension toward his final horror, which came when the door opened to the Laboratory of Genetics where the obscurantist-non-Marxist Professor of Biology Sekla kept his—drosophilae! In Soviet demonol-

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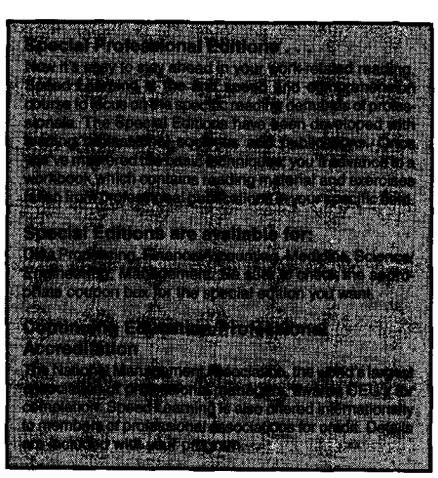

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ogy of the late '40s, the drosophila occupied a place second only to Trotsky. To high school students it was the creation of an American Jew, Thomas Hunt Morgan, and Gregory Mendel, a Czech Catholic monk straight out of Matthew Gregory Lewis. After Academician Lysenko's celebrated victory on the biological front, Mendel's statue was duly removed from its pedestal in the Moravian capital of Brno. When, in the '60s, an International Biological Conference was held in that city, it required a long search before the stone likeness of Mendel was found, covered by dust and debris, in somebody's wine cellar. In the minds of the Young Pioneers, the monk merged with the other kike, Morgan, into a bogeyman called Mendelmorgan, ideally suited to put the fear of the party into little boys and untenured professors. That is what Aksyonov's madeleine means for me. But not, I'm afraid, for many Americans. (An American editor removed a drosophila story from the fifth chapter of my own novel *Miss Silver's Past*; he said it was irrelevant and digressive.)

AND many such madeleines are strewn over the surreal and, alas, so real, landscape of this story of five Russian men who share the patronym Apollinarievich, and are really embodiments of the same Aksyonov. Like Apollinaire's celebrated poem, this novel, with its five sons of the poet who "did not respect any fame," is a veritable *Zone*, very hard to sum up. It is an Old Man River full of rafts, Jims, creaky steamers with dead Paps inside, and lynching parties; a "sweet" Thames bearing empty bottles, sandwich papers, silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends. Toward the end, Kunitser-Sabler-Malkolmov-Kvastishchev-Pantelei-Aksyonov, in one of his/their nightmarish dream-realities, swim in a ghostly stream, "pushing aside old tin cans . . . used condoms, lumps of matted hair, eggshells, countless nail clippings . . . rotten vegetables, used toilet paper. . . ." The river, that symbol of life in schoolroom essays, has changed here into a symbol of the Soviet homeland.

Quite often the book resembles a surrealist comedy—minus the irreverence. Apparently one cannot be irreverent in Russia, the graveyard of so many millions of victims of perpetual misrule. Even "hilarious" scenes—like the one featuring the sculptor Kvastishchev and his "model"(a sexually interconnected circle of bodies consisting of himself and two K.G.B. hookers)—are played out against ominous backgrounds. (In this case, a purring Chaika limousine arrives, bearing the dangerous customer Lygher, once a powerful officer in the town of Magadan, the heart of the sinister Kolyma region.) It is a surrealistically complex novel, a book of "many oddities," as the author himself describes it. Those who still think that Soviet writers may have a great subject, but that their methods of shaping it are outdated, should read *The Burn* at once.

It oscillates continually between reality and fantasy; its point of view migrates through several minds, the minds mingle, then the minds separate—in short, it is a fireworks of modernistic techniques. Both rough and tender, like the blues, it is full of hate and in the next moment brimming with love. And love is pornographically physical, yet a bliss of the soul. I don't remember many love scenes in literature that can match the final lovemaking of the Victim (all the main characters merge together in the last section of the novel) and the dream/real girl Alisa, the wife of a prominent member of the New Class, but also a poor Polish prisoner-girl who once tries to commit suicide by biting off the neck of a cologne bottle.

ALL this "deliberate confusion," however, does not betray the author, free at last from both political and aesthetic censorship, who wants to show off his mastery of the tools now at his disposal. A survivor of Stalin's and Brezhnev's deliberate confusion is trying here—and trying with success—to tell the truth about his terrible life. He brings to mind the quintessential evocations of the medieval sense of hell, the works of Hieronymus Bosch, whose paintings, with their amazing proto-surrealism, use a very similar technique.

In the heart of the confusion is a simple, archetypical Soviet story. It is the story of Tolya Bokov, the half-Jewish son of a "Trotskyite man and a Bukharinite woman" who, at the age of 5, after the arrest of both parents, is sent to an orphanage for "children of enemies of the people." Ten years later the boy's mother is released, but ordered to stay in Magadan in "internal exile." The boy is permitted to join her, only to witness her rearrest a short time later, when Stalin commands that all who have served their sentences, and are now relatively "free" as internal exiles, be sent back to the camps on the same charges for which they were incarcerated years ago.

In the purgatory of Magadan the boy sees many other examples of Marxist re-education. One sticks in his mind forever. Bringing food for his imprisoned mother, he accidentally sees an event straight out of Auschwitz. The interrogator, Captain Cheptsov, asks a tortured prisoner "kindly": "Have they been beating you, Sanya?" "Yes, they have, citizen Captain," whispers the young man in pain. "And did they beat you like this?" asks Cheptsov and jabs his elbow into the prisoner's right eye. Sanya's eyeball is instantaneously suffused with blood. At that moment the boy is spotted and, with a mighty kick, Cheptsov sends him flying, so that the precious bottle of milk in the boy's bundle, destined for his mother, breaks into smithereens.

THE boy grows up to become the five incarnations of Aksyonov—I believe this is essentially an autobiographical story. Captain Cheptsov ages into a mean old-age pensioner who supplements his income by working as an informer/cloakroom attendant in a hard-currency bar. At this point the two meet again. Cheptsov has caught his daughter typing up leaflets for a dissident organization. He beats her up and, his erotic/sadistic passions aroused, he rapes her. Then he departs for the K.G.B. headquarters to "do his duty," i.e., to rat on the girl. Unfortunately (that is, fortunately), he meets two drunkards, and under the impact of their sarcasm, but also under the load of his gnawing memories, he attempts suicide by ramming his head against a radiator. In the emergency room he is saved by Tolya Bokov—in his incarnation as the famous surgeon Malkolmov—who injects into his veins the mysterious substance Lymph-D, distilled from the "lacerated souls" of his Russian patients. Cheptsov comes to life, to appear in another surreal scene on the TV screens in Tolya's native village, from which he admonishes the collective farmers: "Repent of violence, cruelty, cowardice and lies! Repent, you cohorts of steel and you sportsmen heroes of the Munich Olymp—" whereupon he flows "arms and legs spread-eagled like a sky diver into the depths of the television set."

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Thus the simple, archetypal backbone of a complex story, set in the black cosmos of the Soviet Marxist state.

THE STORY meanders among visions, evocations, vignettes, nightmares—among all those madeleines. Closest to my heart, naturally, is the saxophone which belongs to Samson Apollinarievitch Sabler, a Soviet jazzman. "You'll have affairs, little Samsik," says a lovely promiscuous lady of real virtue after she frees Samson of the burden of male virginity, "only don't give up your sax!" The beloved instrument, a source of joy and truth, eventually becomes a weapon. With it Samsik cuts open the forehead of the leader of the Komsomol vigilantes who raided a concert of his band. He is then beaten up by the SA-like thugs. After he comes to, he searches desperately for his horn. He finds it. His sax is "lying alongside him, with a little drop of the enemy's blood still stuck to its bell. Proud sax, golden weapon!"

However, the Komsomol *Sturm-Abteilung Führer* is not the only enemy whose head is smitten with this particular madeleine. Another is a fascistoid mercenary in Africa whose armored carrier has been showering machine-gun bullets on a jungle hospital. The two identical uses of the saxophone thus introduce the inevitable question about the identical nature, and therefore identical accompanying phenomena, of totalitarian regimes, right and left—if, indeed, the old distinction from the days of the National Assembly in Paris still applies to modern dictatorships.

The identity is suggested mostly by images—for instance, of a brutal store manageress, a typical product of a society where all authority is firmly vested in those firmly vested in authority, who reminds the hero of ". . . the cloakroom attendant in the bar . . . [of] Theodore the mercenary in Katanga"; the "cloakroom attendant," of course, is the sadist interrogator Cheptsov. A few times the hint is direct: ". . . our brothers in class, the German Nazis." But such outspokenness is rare and marginal. After having been made witness to the spectral march of women convicts through the permafrost landscape of Siberia, to the vision of the camp bosses entertained by prisoner-actors doing endless time in hopeless Madagan, or to the lot of the "lucky" twenty-fivers in the uranium mines on the Chukchi Peninsula, where one year counts as five but the prisoners' life expectancy is six months—after such and similar scenes from hell, the thoughtful reader will inevitably find himself, without the help of straightforward comparisons, facing Nathanael West's question: "The problem as to why against Fascism and why not against Communism disturbs my sleep." I wish it would disturb the sleep of many in North America.

Can anyone dare to expect a graduate of the world of Magadan to embrace revolution? "Evolution, revolution, pollution" goes the stream of consciousness in Kvastishchev's head, and thinking about his "pal Patrick Thunderjet," an American in Moscow, he cannot remember whether Thunderjet is "professor of Kremlinology . . . or criminology." He decides that there is really no difference. Elsewhere, meditating on Lenin's famous slogan "Communism equals Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country," the writer Pantelei says to himself: "In that case, what's missing? Surely we have long since electrified the whole country, haven't we?" And in another scene, discussing the West with the Kremlicriminologist, he observes: "A few years back the only people I took seriously were those scatty flower children, but now even they have degenerated into revolutionaries; in other words, they've become an organized gang."

BUT are lackluster attitudes toward the revolution and the revolutionaries in the Soviet Union limited to the degenerate sons of Trotskyite fathers and Bukharinite mothers who were admittedly rehabilitated but (observe the totalitarian logic) "the fruit never falls far from the tree"? Hardly. When the American Kremlicriminologist, in need of cash after a drunken bout, sells his shoes to a man standing in line for a shipment of shoes that is rumored to be due for delivery at the GUM department store opposite the Kremlin, this is what happens:

> . . . the line disintegrated, turned into a mob, and surrounded the two extraterrestrial visitors with footwear to sell. . . . The mob waved its arms, shouted something, like at some spontaneous meeting in the days of the First Russian Revolution.

In the context of contemporary Russian literature, Vassily Aksyonov is not just an important writer; he is an epoch-making writer. We who were there, and some American scholars, know what he is talking about when, in an imaginary conversation with Hemingway, the hero of *The Burn* tells Papa: "Ernest! 'Your Cat in the Rain' changed my whole life. Thank you for the overkill." That confrontation with the American virtuoso of the literary dialogue led to Aksyonov's first novel, *A Ticket to the Stars*, with its rich evocations of the speech of Moscow's "guys and dolls" of the early '60s, the time of hope. These youngsters who rediscovered jazz and modern Russian poetry, who courageously spoke up in defense of democracy and demonstrated for freedom—these instinctive swallows of the Russian Spring were truly "Aksyonov's generation."

But all that is gone now.

> In the damp winter of 1966, Moscow put two . . . lads from one of *our* houses on trial. Then four more. Then more, singly,

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> in pairs, in whole batches. They demoted *our* professors, fired *our* theater directors, closed *our* cafés. . . . The epoch of Lenin's centennial began. The Neanderthal features of that old *Pravda* hawk Yurii Zhukov dominated the television screen . . . the disintegration began.

Afterward came the "fraternal help for the Czech enemies" and "everybody stopped blabbering. . . . Today's young people," muses Pantelei, "would regard . . . demonstrations as impossible. Some of them imagined that such things had only happened before the Revolution."

Paradise of bourgeois democracy lost. The hopeful Moscow of the '60s has changed into "a sullen, tight-lipped city, equipped with the last word in word filters and jamming devices." A major tragedy for Russia. A dangerous tragedy for the world.

JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ

Josef Škvorecký is the author most recently of *The Engineer of Human Souls* (Knopf).

THE SECRET OF CITIZENSHIP

Political Judgment by Ronald Beiner

(University of Chicago, 194 pp., $9.50)

Ronald Beiner is a young Canadian political theorist, teaching at the University of Toronto, who edited Hannah Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* and now offers an Arendtian political philosophy of his own. Arendt completed only the volumes on *Thinking* and *Willing* in her ambitious *Life of the Mind*; she intended a trilogy rounded off by *Judging*. Here, the gerund turned into a more sober noun, is Beiner's version of that third volume. It is an original argument, not an attempt to reconstruct what Arendt would have said—critical indeed of some of what she might have said, but still an argument very much influenced by her work.

Beiner wants to defend political judgment against technocratic rationality,so that ordinary citizens, he says, can "reappropriate the right of political responsibility and decision-making that [has] been monopolized by experts." A laudable end, and one that would command greater enthusiasm if we actually lived in the technocracy with which we have so often been threatened. But I have difficulty attributing Ronald Reagan's welfare policies, say, to technocratic rationality, or our Nicaraguan guerrilla war to the rule of experts. Nor do American citizens clamoring for a ban on abortion or the introduction of prayer into the public schools need to be told to "reappropriate" the realm of political action. They are already committed, exactly as Beiner is, to the view that moral values are neither arbitrary nor subjective, and that we ought to argue about them in public and seek public agreement (and enforcement). If it is indeed necessary to fight "against the domination of technology based on science," one might well say that our fundamentalists are doing the best they can.

Behind *Political Judgment* there lurks a different fundamentalism, not Christian but classical, rooted in antique virtue rather than traditional morality. Beiner's book belongs to one of the more impressive genres of contemporary political theory, in which the ancient city, the Greek polis, is set up as a critical standard against which to measure the modern state. Curiously, the genre does not often include serious and realistic accounts of either the polis or the modern state; a mythic view of the first is deployed against a horrific view of the second. In the first, men like Pericles and Thucydides share in the citizenly tasks of political judgment; in the second, men like Adolph Eichmann act out the imperatives of bureaucratic (which is as bad as technocratic) reason. Between these alternatives it is easy enough to choose. It is much harder, however, to say just what the choice of citizenship and judgment means in the modern state, and Greek politics in contemporary dress tends to be high-minded, hortatory, and frighteningly vague.

Beiner's last chapter partakes to some degree of all these qualities, but his book as a whole is better than its last chapter; his detailed and careful discussion of political judgment is far more interesting than the framework within which it is set. What exactly do we do when we weigh options, choose policies, evaluate outcomes, judge political leaders and social systems? Clearly these are common activities, connected to the even more common activities of moral and aesthetic judgment. Beiner explores these connections, and provides an account of political judgment as a complex and comprehensive activity—but also a lay activity, as natural to mankind as morality and taste. We can immediately recognize judgment, he argues, as something different from scientific hypothesis and demonstration. It draws upon every sort of specialized knowledge, but far more importantly upon common sense; it does not admit of certainty, but neither is it "merely" subjective; it can never be validated, but it is itself judged by the judgments of our fellows. Judgments are not true or false, but good or bad, wise or foolish, prudent or reckless, insightful or shallow. Some citizens are better than others at the business of judgment, but there are no experts and no authorities.

BEINER'S study is most importantly a detailed examination of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*. He is a shrewd and perceptive reader and a lively expositor; he manages to make the *Critique of Judgment* a vivid as well as a lucid text—surely a rare achievement. But I can't comment on his commentary here. I want to focus on the argument that emerges from it: on the conditions of political judgment, the setting and critical placement of the citizen as judge.

Political judgment, according to Beiner, is of two sorts: we make judgments with other people, and we pass judgments on other people (and on the judgments they make). We are actors and spectators. Though the roles can be separated and played by different people, the citizen necessarily plays them both. But how can he do that, since the actor must be involved and the spectator must be detached? Where is the citizen to stand when he judges? Beiner doesn't improve upon Kant's unhelpful conclusion: "We must avoid coming too

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near just as much as remaining too far away." He is only more elegant. "The concrete achievement of political judgment is a living synthesis of detachment and involvement, of passionate commitment and critical distance." Indeed. But what are we doing (and how does it feel) when we are passionately distant?

Beiner has more to say about the meaning of involvement than detachment. Perhaps it is easier to talk about the first than the second, for involvement is actual and detachment most often metaphorical. We are involved when we share a political world with others, participate in practical discourse, deliberate, argue, decide about common concerns. Citizens are shaped by such involvement, and so are their judgments and even the criteria by which they judge. A literally detached man or woman could not judge at all; he would have no understanding of what the citizens were doing, of the goals they sought, of the values that informed their public life. Sympathy, a kind of imaginative participation, might bridge the gap, but the greater the sympathy, the less the detachment. How does one strike a proper balance? Beiner tries to build detachment into participation by distinguishing political friendship from both the personal and the collective forms of love. Friendship sustains the space within which the citizens argue with one another; love, reaching for intimacy and union, closes down the space. Lovers don't judge one another—well, not politically anyway.

THE Kantian alternative to love and friendship is respect, a distanced appreciation of the autonomy and dignity of all human beings. But it is difficult to see how one accords respect to particular other people without entering, practically or imaginatively, into their everyday lives, values, and choices. Respect hangs on understanding, and understanding is a social activity; too much critical distance will get in the way. How, then, can judgment ever be critical? We know, of course, that citizens criticize one another all the time; they don't have to go into exile (at least in the open societies) in order to attack their fellows. One reason they are critical of one another is that they have different interests; criticism is incidental to conflict. Beiner takes no notice of criticism of this sort. Politics for him, as for the tradition he represents, is discourse about ends, not conflict about interests.

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Even in discourse, however, critical judgment seems common enough. We respect our fellow citizens as moral agents, capable (as we are) of choosing ends, and together we try to make the best choices we can, given the traditions, values, and material constraints that constitute our historical situation. And then we criticize our fellows when they fail to live up to the requirements of moral agency or to the aspirations and concrete possibilities of our common life.

THESE are the sorts of judgments, presumably, that Beiner wants to understand, and, perhaps more importantly, to celebrate. His central thesis is that judgment is a universal capacity, and that the life of the citizen is a good life, *the* good life, because it enables us to exercise that capacity in the fullest sense. And yet he gives us no examples of ordinary men and women—involved, committed, active, citizen-friends—actually making judgments. His book is a distant evocation of Arendt's Greeks, judges all, endlessly talking about the highest things. (What things, exactly?)

His exemplary figures are of a different sort entirely—not active citizens who possess "a common tradition and shared history, public laws and obligations to which all are subject, common ideals and shared meanings," but pure spectators. No doubt, spectators can be judges, and there is a philosophical tradition that makes them the best, because they are the only disinterested, dispassionate, and objective judges. But it is just this tradition that Beiner wants (rightly) to revise. He aims, as I have said, at a synthesis of passionate commitment and critical distance. But then his examples represent a radical failure of nerve.

His favorite political judge is Arendt herself, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. He recalls the controversy this book generated, but cites only the criticism that accused Arendt of failing to "love" the Jewish victims of Nazi genocide. She replied that love has no place in politics, for it collapses the space, the "in-between" that is the necessary condition of "cool and sober" judgment. But the crucial issue here is not love but friendship, Beiner's other (and equally) necessary condition. "A sense of friendship in a common political entity," he writes, is crucial to political judgment. With regard to the communal life of the Jews, however, Arendt was the very embodiment of critical distance; even as a spectator she was, long before she wrote *Eichmann*, resolutely hostile, her writing uninformed by that "sympathy that arises out of common involvement."

Beiner's second example is Merleau-Ponty's *Humanism and Terror*, a book later repudiated (or at least "reexamined") by its author in a memorable act of political judgment, informed by sympathy with and distance from his previous self. *Humanism and Terror* was informed only by abstract theory; it was an argument about history, necessity, and freedom that made no contact at all, sympathetic or critical, with the actual lives of the people whose fate it considered. A convoluted apology for Stalinist terror, it fails to meet any of Beiner's criteria for political judgment. He reads the book as an "account of tragic responsibility," the tragedy arising from a conflict of membership and judgment. But surely in this case, as in Arendt's, no such conflict arises. No one actually involved in a political community with the victims of Nazism or Stalinism would have judged as those two did.

What has gone wrong? Beiner's book is so intelligent and useful that it is hard to understand the radical inadequacy of his examples or the hortatory vagueness of his conclusion. The problem lies, I think, with his own political judgment of contemporary citizens. He finds us so degenerate (compared, I suppose, to Pericles and Thucydides) that he hardly bothers to look at the judgments we make of one another, here and now. It may well be that these judgments don't reflect the appropriate synthesis of passion and distance or, more likely, that they don't engage enough of us, seriously enough, enough of the time. But no one can tell us that who doesn't himself write out of sympathy with and involvement in contemporary political life.

MICHAEL WALZER

THE GENIUS AS SWINE

Fassbinder: Film Maker
by Ronald Hayman

(Simon & Schuster, 164 pp., $17.95, $9.95, paper)

Rainer Werner Fassbinder made films the way he smoked—all the time, more than one at a time, sometimes without seeming to notice or to care—and then tossed them away, like butts deserving to be swept up with the rest of our garbage. Or is that what he wanted us to believe? It was part of his cruelty and self-pity that he sometimes behaved like the helpless instrument of his chronic creative rush. Don't blame me, I'm a movie pig. I'm self-destructive, therefore I exist. Dead at 37, he had directed forty-three films. At the rate he's going, Warren Beatty will be over 150 before he's made that many. Beatty's pictures are arrived at like wars. Fassbinder made movies the way we watch TV.

It seems fatuous to ponder whether Fassbinder was a great director or a great artist; he had so little time for such loftiness. He was unique and misanthropic, pledged to little more than excess. There was a flagrant punk in Fassbinder who wanted to offend, to fart in mother's face and surely to die to vindicate his creed of a world fit for pigs. Yet there was a mawkish romantic there, too, a mother's boy who could get drunk on Fine Women, True Love, Beauty, whatever other intoxicants he was shoveling down. He made pictures as downright awful as *Despair* and *Querelle*. He behaved so badly to those close to him that occasionally they turned on him and beat him up—without protest or self-defense from Fassbinder. He was too lazy or too great an addict of immediacy to think much. He grew bored with his own projects, and he gave up talking to some of his actors. When they cried, he filmed them. You can hardly read about him without wanting to kick the sneering face. Which was all he wanted, for he reckoned he and the world were so ugly they deserved the boot.

Perhaps the first book we need about Fassbinder is not a clear, judicious esti-

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mate, but another *Edie*, a collage that conveys the stink and the messiness. We ought to hear the sordid details about the homosexual lovers he discovered, flouted, and then abandoned. There should be reports from those who found the bodies of two of them—El Hedi Ben Salem from *Fear Eats the Soul* and Armin Meier from *Fear of Fear*—suicides both. The movies, good and bad alike, grow out of his goading and humiliation of actors, and his reckless exploitation of private distress in scenarios. We should feel the panic and the sadism when Fassbinder, his ex-wife Ingrid Caven, El Hedi Ben Salem, and others of his company swam naked in a pool. Fassbinder told Salem to get a kitchen knife. Then, as some of the men held Caven, he ordered Salem to cut off her hair. She screamed and fought and escaped partly bald, with wounds on her arms and throat.

Ronald Hayman tells that story: he allocates some space to the dangers of being with Fassbinder. But his book keeps a prim, tense distance, as if he really thought it could balance a brief life and a critical assessment in 50,000 words, according to the limits set by its original, British publisher. Hayman is the author already of biographies of de Sade, Nietzsche, Kafka, and Brecht, but he never goes far in tracing those influences on Fassbinder. He doesn't seem to know the films well enough. He accepts a format in which they are bound to be neglected (one-and-a-half pages for *Maria Braun*, ending with "Nevertheless, the modulation into the political key is rather facile"), and he lacks the abandon or the drunken style to descend into this world where flowers grew in the trash. Fassbinder needs Bukowski.

A RANGE of Fassbinder's associates has been interviewed for this book. Still, we seldom feel their tone or presence, or their hanging dependence on the director who so often abused them. The more Hayman sounds like a flat court reporter, the more outlandish the situations become. It is not mocking to say he needs more humor, more courage, and even more wounds, if the milieu and its spilling into films are to be described honestly. As it is, he ties himself in knots and bows of correct cliché: "Many people got the impression that Fassbinder had killed himself, which was true only in so far as his whole way of life had been suicidal." That is about as helpful as the regular reminder that this man was a bundle of contradictions.

Epic self-destruction is not to be tidied up, not if understanding is hoped for. Hayman's glimpses into the real life and its state of seething, unofficial rehearsal are frightening, and Fassbinder admirers shouldn't try to deny that fear. But the reader's disgust makes it easier to dismiss the films, or to refuse them. Moreover, we never know what this life felt like from the inside looking out. There is none of the comedy of boredom or ordinariness to frame the outbursts, and no true interior sense of the affection that tied Fassbinder to so many unlikely people or the loathing that prompted him to trash them. In sum, why was Fassbinder so volatile, so torn between stagnation and explosion? And what are his films doing?

HE WAS born in May 1945, the son of a doctor to prostitutes. His parents divorced when he was 6. In his telling, neither one cared for him much. He grew up on stories and movies (American movies in the main). When his mother fell ill with tuberculosis, the kid looked after himself. He said later that he had no real childhood; but he never gave up the manners of infantilism. At school, the teachers could not make up their minds whether he was a genius or insane. He became homosexual—deliberately ugly, dirty, and tattered, but with wicked, beguiling eyes. In the mid-1960s he started hanging out with actors and making amateur movies. He kept a company of brilliant, unstable outsiders; and he kept them unstable. Anything to stop the loneliness.

Prompted by the events of 1968, by the influence of Godard, Rohmer, Chabrol, Jean-Marie Straub, and Douglas Sirk, contemptuous of rehabilitated Germany and wallowing in mixed feelings for Nazism, Fassbinder became the tyrant khan of a group of actors who were both the players and the material for his movies. First it was avant-garde theater in Munich, in stripped-down adaptations of the classics or new plays thrown together by the group. The work was harsh, aggressive, and controversial. The stage was often no bigger than a room, charged with danger and claustrophobia. For all his striving after liberty, his film frames were cages in which the characters were grilled and prodded by the torture of visibility.

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why Fassbinder moved into film. It was not just that he was a film fan, preferring the "pulp" tone and reach of movies to the status of theater. Theater bored him because you had to do the same thing every night. You rehearsed to get a thing right, and when you got it, you locked it up. But Fassbinder didn't believe in a right way. In 1970 he shot six films, craving the once-and-only "now," maybe half-written, barely rehearsed, raw moments which became that beautiful dead thing, a movie, which he need never look at again once he'd cut it up.

There are always the same players in those films—Ulli Lommel, Harry Bauer, Gunther Kaufman (black and Bavarian; Fassbinder loved such "impossibilities"), Ingrid Caven, Kurt Raab, Margit Carstensen, Irm Hermann, Eva Mattes, Gottfried John, Fassbinder himself, and Hanna Schygulla. Most of the company lived together; Fassbinder liked to keep them captive. But Schygulla was an exception. She led her own life and did not mix socially. She was largely spared the director's harangues. Hayman notes this untouchability, but doesn't elaborate. Not the smallest contradiction in Fassbinder is that the loud gay could also treat heterosexuality, and photograph women, with a kind of masochistic reverence, part mockery of conventional iconography, part aspiration to be a woman. No matter how sordid the undergrowth, Schygulla rises out of it like a necessary goddess, a star amid all the unkempt, agit-prop naturalism.

It isn't the case that Fassbinder went on at full pace until he dropped. He slowed; he aged fast. Sometimes he went through the motions, weary of his own outrage. You can't make films like a free man for long and stay fresh. It's a medium that needs to chain its makers. Fassbinder should have been forced to direct "Family Feud" and "General Hospital." That would have brought his sneer back, alive and fertile.

He was doing cocaine, speed, pills, booze, food, sex—anything, so long as it was to excess. He used to dose up in front of friends, telling them they'd be dead if they did what he was doing. By the end, he was down to two or three films a year, though *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is the equivalent of ten. He had become a festival celebrity. He had much larger budgets than he had needed at the outset: some of his later films cost over $1 million! But I don't think he was softened by success. At Cannes in 1982, he still woke up a hotel in the middle of the night because he was terrified of being alone.

While his later pictures—*Despair, Maria Braun, Lola, Veronika Voss*—did get a wider showing, there are enthusiasts who don't know his first torrent of pictures, that includes *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?, Whity, The American Soldier, Beware of a Holy Whore, Merchant of the Four Seasons, The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant,* and *Fear Eats the Soul.* There's more work than one can easily digest—that's the point, Fassbinder wanted us to vomit or grow fat. Why watch eight hours of TV a day when you can do twenty-one? The early films may yet prove the best. At the moment, I'd pick *Petra von Kant* and *Holy Whore* as the best introduction. The latter is especially interesting because it is a portrait of the Fassbinder entourage stranded in a foreign hotel, waiting for more money so a film can go ahead. Like *Petra von Kant,* it is rivetingly immediate and completely camp. Hayman hardly mentions Fassbinder the stylist, but it is vital to his impact. Ostensibly repelled by glamor, bourgeois decor, and starriness, he was really a sucker for all three. *Petra von Kant* loves to hate its lesbian fashion designer, and the loathing is as gorgeous as von Sternberg's sculpting of Dietrich's face.

But Fassbinder did deride our cultural habit of wanting truth in beauty. In trying to say what his films do, we must start with his realization that the medium was already used up, yesterday's sensation gone stale and arty. He didn't want to reform it. He piled on the absurdity, the disgust, the decaying prettiness. His vision was that loneliness is all, with love its masochistic dream. Art, equally, was no consolation or delight, but a travesty projection of our neurotic need to fantasize.

It could be sophomoric despair, but it was never cheerful. The concentration camp hangs over his work. It was the evil example from which he could not recover. It was butchery, despite man's efforts to believe in his own soul. It was the justification for his cruelty, and a source of his self-hatred. "Each man kills the thing he loves" goes the song (it was Oscar Wilde's refrain) in *Querelle,* like a foreboding dirge. But it goes on and on until we hear in it the mantra of reassurance.

So many times, in life and art, he went over the edge, into unforgivable cruelty and hollow pessimism. But often enough he stopped short, and let the films hit us in all of our being. I mentioned Douglas Sirk, a Danish-German director who came to America as a refugee from Hitler and made a string of "women's pictures" in the 1950s (*Written on the Wind, Imitation of Life*)

Reading Chekhov

> "I realized that when you love you must either in your reasoning about that love, start from what is higher, more important than happiness or unhappiness, sin or virtue in their usual meaning, or you must not reason at all."

Reading Chekhov in a library book,
and stopping at this passage highlighted in pencil,
one delicate, wavy line, as if the hand,
even in its shyness, were unable,
like a mouth or the eyes, to conceal joy.
Or perhaps this reader discovered that truth
for the first time then,
whose joy is less the recognition of another
holding the same as true, than
it is the feeling this knowledge arrives
on time, and is not too late—
as it is for Alyohin, kissing
Anna Alexeyevna's face with his eyes,
kissing her lips, the cheeks and forehead,
her eyes, wanting to devour completely
the old sight of seeing her
through the impediments of propriety,
as the last whistle sounds, the train
prepares to depart.
As it was perhaps too late for Chekhov.
So that they are left telling stories
to an occasional visitor coming in from the cold,
or to one alone on a Summer's night,
who drowses in his chair, a book fallen to his lap,
and sees a far-off, hazy light, motionless,
or moving slowly towards him,
as if over rusty and uncertain track.

Michael Korson

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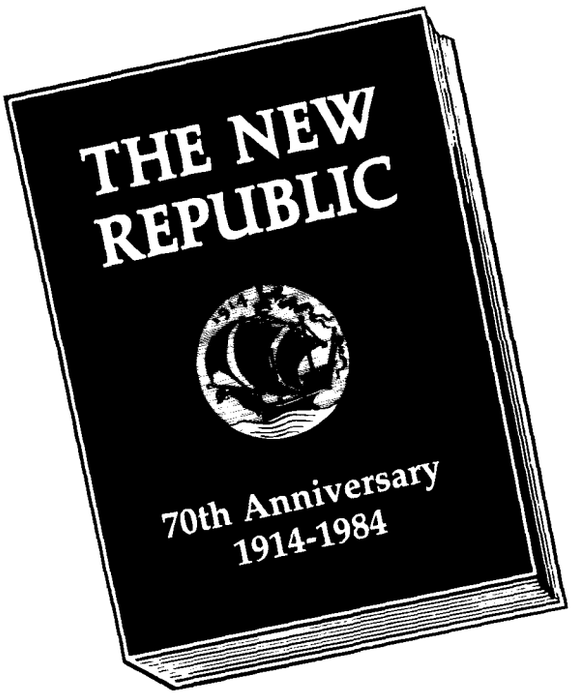
"Don't give up the ship."



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that are among the sources for "Dallas" and "Dynasty." Fassbinder loved Sirk; he once wrote about some of his films. Let me end by quoting this odd, piercing account of Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows*, starring Rock Hudson and Jane Wyman. It shows Fassbinder's feeling for movies as banal parables, and it explains how you might think of him as a genius and a madman. The passage may not be quite accurate about Sirk's intentions—he was a polite ironist, a flamboyant social critic, who always sweetened the pill—but it describes the films Fassbinder wanted and which he managed, maybe fifteen times, to make:

> It's a pretty abysmal start for the love of one's life. She, he and the world they live in. Basically that's how it seems. She has a motherly touch, she looks as though she might be able to soften at the right moment: we can understand what Rock sees in her. He is a tree trunk. He is quite right to want to be inside her. The world around is evil. The women all talk too much. There are no men in the film apart from Rock, in that respect arm chairs and glasses are more important. After seeing this film small-town America is the last place in the world I would want to go. What it amounts to is that somewhere along the line Jane tells Rock that she is going to leave him, because of her idiotic children and so on. Rock doesn't protest too much, he still has Nature, after all. And there Jane sits on Christmas Eve, her children are going to leave her anyway and they've brought her a television set for Christmas. It's too much. It tells you something about the world and what it does to you. Later on, Jane goes back to Rock because she has headaches, which is what happens to us all if we don't fuck once in a while. But now she's back there's still no happy ending. If anyone has made their love life that complicated for themselves they won't be able to live happily afterwards.
>
> This is the kind of thing Douglas Sirk makes movies about. People can't live alone, but they can't live together either. That is why his movies are so desperate.

DAVID THOMSON

David Thomson's new novel, *Suspects*, will be published by Knopf in the spring.

MEASURING MADNESS

The Insanity Defense and the Trial of John W. Hinckley, Jr. by Lincoln Caplan

(David R. Godine, 135 pp., $13.95)

During the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., the 27-year-old whose unusual interpretation of *Taxi Driver* led him to shoot President Reagan, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist testified to the incompetence of a therapist the Hinckleys had once hired to treat their son. In a truly inspired piece of headline writing, the Boston *Herald* produced this summary of the testimony: HARVARD DOC: HINCK'S SHRINK STINKS.

The doctors got to trade insults in the courtroom courtesy of Hinckley's lawyers, who had their client plea not guilty by reason of insanity. Defense attorneys called in psychiatrists to bolster this claim, and prosecutors brought in others to knock it down. The jury ended up accepting Hinckley's plea and banished him, probably forever, to a mental hospital. The public's reaction was that it's crazy to let a bunch of shrinks say Hinckley hadn't meant to pull the trigger, when everyone who owns a television had seen him wrestled to the ground with the gun in his hand.

Instantly, polls came out showing that a huge majority of the public believed too many murderers were using the insanity defense to go free. Sensing a popular cause, law-and-order types in Congress called the Hinckley verdict yet another example of how American justice coddles criminals. A host of reforms were proposed, including legislation to abolish the defense altogether. Hinckley's target himself weighed in on the matter. Current laws on the insanity

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defense, which require the prosecution to prove that the defendant was sane at the time of his crime, are too stringent, said Ronald Reagan. "If you start thinking about even a lot of your friends," he explained, "you would have to say, 'Gee, if I had to prove they were sane, I would have a hard job.' "

IN AN ESSAY chock full of details from Hinckley's trial, Lincoln Caplan tries both to deflate some of the public's anxiety over the insanity defense, and to defend the defense itself. The first purpose he accomplishes fairly convincingly, noting that the success rate of insanity pleaders is quite low (only 1,625 defendants beat the rap by pleading insanity in 1978), and that, of those defendants, the majority are forgers, shoplifters, car thiefs, and the like. Most insanity acquittees end up incarcerated in mental hospitals for as long as they'd be in jail anyway. In short, it's not such a terrible problem. (Caplan doesn't seem concerned that minimizing the threat tends to diminish the importance of his own book, too.)

To make his second point, Caplan reviews the various proposals for reform: shifting the burden of proof on the question of insanity from prosecution to defense; creating a new "guilty but insane" verdict; and adopting a *mens rea* standard, which would limit psychiatric testimony to strict discussion of the defendant's intention to commit a crime—and thus, for all practical purposes, eliminate the insanity defense. He argues that the guilty but insane idea has been shown to be ineffective. (In Michigan, it produced no change in the number of insanity acquittals.) And he suggests that the *mens rea* rule would abandon a central idea of American criminal justice—that the law should draw distinctions between those who are responsible for their actions and those who are not. In any case, Caplan points out, it's not clear who would be deterred from crime by abolishing the insanity defense, because few criminals pause to consider potential trial strategies. Almost by process of elimination, then, Caplan concludes that we're better off with the present relatively liberal set of insanity defense laws.

The problem for both critics and defenders of the insanity defense is that mental illness is probably best thought of as a spectrum of irrational behavior, not as an either-or condition. The degree of an individual's responsibility for his actions can vary according to time and circumstances—some crooks coldly plan their crimes, others lash out in a frenzy, and many more fall somewhere in between. In a sense, President Reagan is right: all of us know someone capable of acting "crazy" at some time or another, perhaps even crazy enough to do something against the law. Such complexity could probably never be reflected in the terms—"guilty" or "not guilty," "sane" or "insane"—which the law must use. This is why Caplan's dismissal of the "guilty but insane" idea seems a bit too easy. Though such a verdict might be ineffective in some technical sense, it does recognize psychological complexity at the same time that it satisfies society's need to confer symbolic moral condemnation on criminals.

In any case, Congress has already acted to limit the insanity defense. The omnibus crime bill signed by President Reagan this fall shifts the burden of proving insanity to the defendant, and narrows the legally acceptable definition of insanity. (These changes, however, only affect federal cases.) This is probably the last action Congress will take for quite some time, so Caplan's book may have arrived too late to have an impact on public policy. Still, it doesn't seem to have been intended to settle the question, only to make a solid contribution to the discussion. And this it does.

CHUCK LANE

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

we were informed that they were neither formally associated with it nor with any other of Mr. LaRouche's organizations.

MICHAEL I. BURCH
Assistant Secretary of Defense
Washington, D.C.

Mr. King and Mr. Radosh reply:
Mr. Burch contradicts the account we received from John d'Amecourt, the programs director for the Pentagon office of public affairs. Mr. d'Amecourt said General Smith and Mr. Miller went to the Schiller Institute meeting expecting to address 2,000 people and were annoyed to find only a small group of veterans. As for partisan activity, Mr. d'Amecourt said the LaRouchians were regarded as "a conservative group" that was "very supportive" of the Administration, and that for this reason the Pentagon attempted to find them speakers for their events.

THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

Following is a list of books TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence by Warren F. Kimball (Princeton University Press). World War II, as witnessed and waged by two great leaders and good friends. (Reviewed 12/24/84)

Family Dancing by David Leavitt (Knopf). A collection of well-paced portraits of family life from a new writer. (12/24/84)

Zhou Enlai: A Biography by Dick Wilson (Viking). The mixed career of Mao's closest comrade. (12/3/84)

Slavery and Human Progress by David Brion Davis (Oxford University Press). A meditation on the morals and methods of studying slavery. (11/26/84)

Secrets and Other Stories by Bernard MacLaverty (Viking). Scenes from Irish life. (11/26/84)

The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War by George Kennan (Pantheon). A grim scholarly study of political and military shortsightedness. (11/5/84)

T. S. Eliot: A Life by Peter Ackroyd (Simon & Schuster). An intelligent, lucid biography of the poet, critic, and man. (12/17/84)

Bright Lights, Big City by Jay McInerney (Vintage Books). A funny first novel about getting wired and getting tired in Manhattan. (12/3/84)

The New Politics of Inequality by Thomas Byrne Edsall (Norton). A brilliant analysis of class, ideology, and money in politics. (10/29/84)

The Nature of the Child by Jerome Kagan (Basic). A challenging look at the family and its influence. (11/5/84)

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Migration

I RETURNED to Washington in September, having spent fourteen weeks traveling round the United States in a Chevy van. One unexpected result of my journey is that I think it highly unlikely that I will spend another summer in Washington, and just as probable that I will shake the dust of the capital from my feet for good in fifteen months or so. More insistently than at any time in the past, I have found myself asking what the East Coast has to offer. The answer is now clear: with the exception of New York City, very little. Unless you are interested in celebrity, there is little reason to be on either coast. So: where to live?

THERE ARE PEOPLE who think that if you are no longer married, if your children are grown, and if you are a writer who does not need to be at an office, then you have the luxury of choosing where you wish to live. But it is one of those freedoms that is a perfect bind. What do you want to have around you? Both the family in which I was raised and my own children are scattered. Obligations to other people can keep one in a place; and, of course, there are friends. But friends also scatter. Their jobs and their lives take them elsewhere. I have more close friends in Washington now than in any other place; but I have more friends in different places than I have in Washington.

THERE ARE so many places "out there" in America that are full of life and interest, because they make things in them. Do you know where your bulletin board is made? No. But you can drive into a tiny town in northeast Indiana, and there they make bulletin boards. How satisfying to make something so useful. I found it exciting to be in the Valley of the Jolly Green Giant, driving south from Minneapolis-St. Paul into Iowa. Ho! Ho! Ho! As my companion and I went from big city to small town and village, I realized how much grittiness and spice is given to life in places that manufacture and produce. To know that Pillsbury is milling flour in Minneapolis, or that they are ranching in the mountains above Helena, Montana, or that they are turning out the hat bodies of the Stetson in Danbury, Connecticut, and finishing the Stetson in all its glory in St. Joseph, Missouri (all places that we visited), makes even the news in the papers seem real. Even in a northeastern town as chronically depressed as Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, people stay; and among the reasons is that manufacturing towns have strong and resilient characters. I've found Washington increasingly unbearable on my return, primarily because it makes absolutely nothing. In New York you can at least see them trundling garments on coat racks along Seventh Avenue.

I WAS ONCE with an English and an American journalist when one of them asked, "What do we need money for?" The question is searching, but on the spur of the moment I answered: "Books, booze, and a broad." (Years later I found myself explaining awkwardly to someone that I used "broad" only for alliteration.) It is much the same if one asks, "Where do I want to live?" Isaac Bashevis Singer once said that whenever he came to a new place he asked first if there was a good library. I can understand that, and I would insist on being in striking distance of a good library. But thirty miles outside any substantial university town would meet that criterion. So the choice remains wide open. Then there is conversation. A much admired New York poet once said to me, when I was living out West, "Isn't it the height of self-betrayal to live among one's intellectual inferiors?" I was about to answer, "Then how can you bear to live in New York?" But I held my tongue, since I was at his dinner table in his poet's garret on Central Park West.

I HARDLY READ newspapers anymore. This was already fairly true before we set out. I think they are poor reading for a journalist. They are one reason journalists go on saying the same things. But it was a revelation to go for fourteen weeks without ever seeing *The Washington Post*, and only occasionally seeing *The New York Times* for sale in some unlikely small town in northwest Idaho, and to feel no less informed about what a reasonably alert individual needs to know. With *USA Today*, which was available in the smallest places, and a few good magazines—this one, of course; *The Texas Observer* (wherever you live); *Inc.*, which is on the frontier of change in America; *Scientific American*; *Rolling Stone*, which I devour; *The Times Literary Supplement*; and one or two good quarterlies, which often scoop the papers by three months—I feel I know enough. But the wider point is that conversation broadens itself when it does not revolve around what the papers say. I ban the discussion of politics and journalism from my own table. But it was when I returned to Washington this time that I realized how thin its conversation is, after months of talking to people about events that came out of their own lives, and not out of the Op-Ed pages. When you've met a roaming cowboy in Mankato, Minnesota, who goes by the name of Hooter, and quotes Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd to you, and in answer to a question about his life recites a ballad which he himself has written, it is galling to be asked if you have read George Will's latest column. I don't like living in places where people do the same things I do. I'm interested in what's other than me.

BUT ALL OF THIS only points to a deeper dissatisfaction. I find it hard now to be interested in politics. I do not think that America and most of our Western societies engage any longer in political activity. In the age of the media and direct mailing, it is not only Ronald Reagan who has become a puppet. So have virtually all politicians, and most of the American people seem to share my opinion. We toured America in an election year, and only once did anyone mention the election or any of the candidates. That was in the Central Valley of California, when Geraldine Ferraro was being nominated a hundred miles away. (They didn't think much of her.) Americans know that politics is an activity of the past, that the kind of power that changes lives no longer rests with politicians. I used to complain about Washington's obsession with politics. Now the politics they talk about is even less real than before. Conversation here is a lot of journalists talking about journalism. What a capital. Let me out.

H.F.

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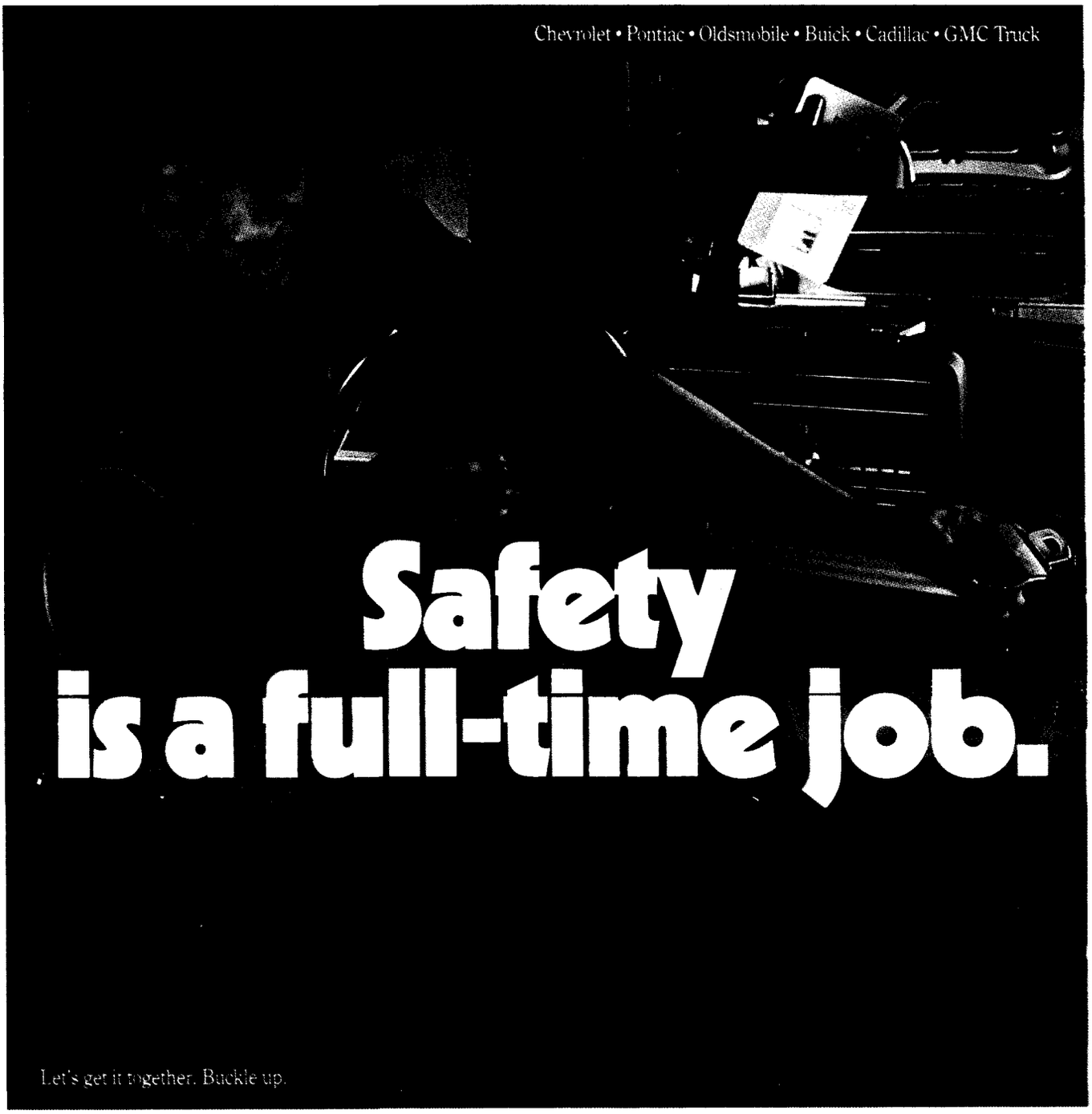

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